ON THE INDIAN HILLS;

OR,

COFFEE-PLANTING IN SOUTHERN INDIA.

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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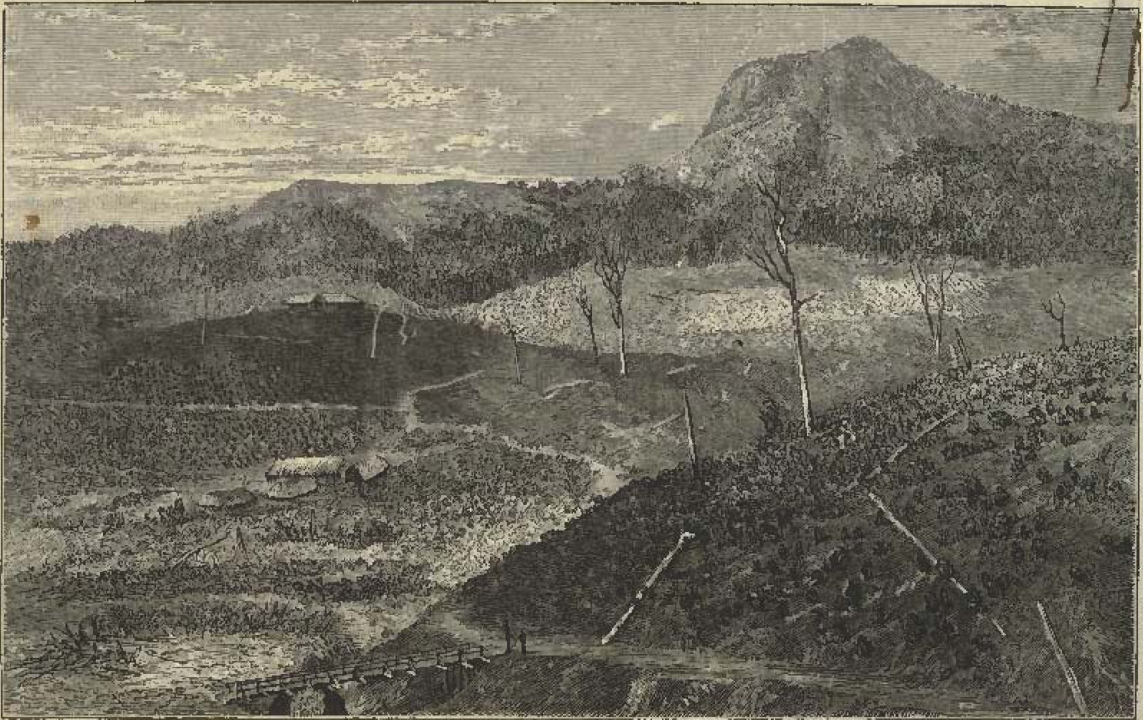

Frontispiece to Vol. I.] A COFFEE ESTATE. [*Page* 313.

ON THE INDIAN HILLS.

CHAPTER I.

OUTWARD BOUND.

We were starting, and the *Almora*, which had floated down to Gravesend with the last of the ebb tide, was already surrounded with boats crowding about the companion ladder. Sailors and passengers were hurrying backwards and forwards with shawls, wraps, and light luggage of all sorts; the boatmen were quarrelling amongst themselves, and everybody seemed in a flurry. On deck some enterprising hucksters had established temporary stalls, and were doing a good trade in armchairs, camp-stools, and various odds and ends of merchandise useful to passengers on the voyage: while the crew, mostly brown-skinned Hindoos, were running about on various tasks, and lowering

the heavier baggage into the deep holds. Making my way through the crowd, I descended to the saloon and wandered round the long table, reading the neatly printed names of my fellow-passengers, each affixed to the door of the cabin which they were to occupy; until my own name was discerned, coupled with one other, and I entered my sea-quarters. I had been fortunate enough to secure a cabin with two advantages over most of the others. Firstly, it was as nearly as possible mid-ships on the port or left-hand side, which is the north side across the Indian Ocean, and consequently the coolest; and secondly, though the cabin was fitted up with berths for four, the only occupants during the voyage were to be myself and a Scotch gentleman, Mr. S——.

In the matter of luggage experience has taught me the advantage of taking as little as possible into one's cabin, and well considering all that does enter. A single portmanteau is allowed by the rules of the ship, and should contain a plentiful supply of linen, a warm suit of clothes, white trousers and coats, which every one dons after leaving Port Saïd, a few books for reading, writing materials, etc., be-

sides the ordinary toilet requisites. With half a glance to see that things were in their places, and having made the acquaintance of my "chum" S——, we got back to deck, and whiled away the time leaning over the bulwarks and watching the coming of the passengers and their friends; the continual arrival of boats alongside promising a goodly muster for the voyage.

Presently a bell sounded, and the different groups on deck descended to the saloon, where the long tables were set out for luncheon. Here, for the first time, it was possible to get a fair and comprehensive view of our fellow-passengers, and we mentally speculated on their different occupations and prospects.

At the head of the table sat our worthy captain, who had spent the best part of a long life in journeying backwards and forwards between England and the tropics. Many times has he presided over such a solemn first luncheon as this, and many thousands of exiles have travelled under his fostering care. Below him, on either side, were ranged the passengers, and it was not difficult to tell which were old Indians, or to separate them from the "griffins."

Colonel F——, returning to Madras with his wife and two daughters, was clearly to be ranked amongst the former, and it was plain to see some half-dozen young men scattered up and down the table were amongst the latter. I knew them much better before long, and found them excellent fellows, all very confident in their own abilities, and fully determined to make fortunes when they got out, but all with very vague ideas of India and coffee-planting, for which most of them—like myself—were bound. Amongst the other passengers were several ladies—"grass-widows" going to look after their husbands, and young ladies going out to their parents; so there was small fear of a dull voyage.

Was ever any outward-bound ship known to start punctually? It was not until 2 p.m.—two hours after our advertised time of departure—that the last passenger had come on board, the chair-sellers and miscellaneous crowd of dealers, boatmen, and agents had been cleared off the ship and down the companion ladder, and the order sent forward to "up anchor." A final whistle sounded, and, with a rattling clatter, the steam capstan started,

and link by link the great muddy cable came up, and the ship slowly drew ahead, while the crowd of row-boats dropped astern. The houses and ships slipped by one after another; we came to the outskirts of the town, and passed the pier and jetty, where a crowd of people were standing; upon which ensued much waving of handkerchiefs by my fellow-passengers who were ranged along the starboard bulwarks. Then, easily steaming down the Lower Hope, the town gradually merged into a grey mass, and "home was on the horizon." The moment was too much for several of the ladies, especially some of the younger ones, and handkerchiefs which had gone several times to their eyes before, now remained there for a long spell.

One by one, all the well-known objects of the "water-road of all the world" came into sight and faded behind—the long, low Essex marshes, with solitary cottages dotted over them; then Cliffe, perched on its high chalk shelf, and then Sheerness and the shores of the isles of Sheppey and Thanet. Some ladies, who doubted their abilities to stand much rough sea, were making anxious inquiries of one of the officers as to

what they thought of the weather; but not even the worst of sailors found any excuse for keeping away when the dinner hour came, and the sound of the bell, vigorously swung by the steward, mustered all saloon passengers below.

The meal was as elaborate and formal as a dinner in any of the most fashionable 'longshore hotels. The days of roughing it, and putting up with short supplies of food and drink, have vanished for the present generation. The captain sits at the head of the long table running along the centre of the saloon, with the most distinguished passengers to right and left of him, and further down the table, distributed amongst the other voyagers, are the ship's senior officers and the doctor—the latter, by the way, generally the leader in all sorts of fun, and prodigal of wonderful stories. Flowers in swinging vases graced our board, fresh and beautiful when leaving England, but soon to wither as the gardens they grew in disappear farther and farther astern of the *Almora*.

All the food is cooked by native Indian cooks on board, and brought to table and served by a small army of uniformed natives, whose bare feet glide about in perfect silence over the

carpeted deck. Each of these "boys"—as the old Anglo-Indians call them, no matter how venerable they may be in point of age—has to look after certain of the passengers, and confines his attention to them. They wait very well, and while standing motionless, with arms folded, behind one's back, are all eyes and ears, anticipating the wants of each person almost as soon as they are conceived.

Altogether, while the weather remains fine, these meals on board ship are very enjoyable—a long series of "small and early" dinner-parties, with plenty of pleasant company. On my first night I found myself sitting next to a pretty little lady, with blue eyes and a long plait of brown hair, perhaps about ten years old, who was going out with an elder sister to her parents at Calcutta. At first she was very shy, but gradually we broke the ice, and then I had to answer a whole host of questions, and explain everything on what she clearly considered a voyage into fairyland.

On coming up from dinner that evening, we had a slight adventure, which might have ended unfortunately. It was just getting dark and chilly, we were silently ploughing our way

towards the Channel, and the lights of Deal were faintly twinkling far away down the black coast line, when, noticing a stir amongst the native crew, and hearing the officers giving orders in an unusually loud tone of voice, I went forward and found there was an alarm of fire—rather an unpleasant thing just after dinner and at the commencement of a voyage—and looking at the forehatch, there, sure enough, were several little columns of smoke creeping out from under the canvas that covered the hold. The officers were getting the fire-hose down and fixing the pumps; and as soon as this was done and every man at his station, the black crew rushed at the lumber, hen-coops, coils of rope, etc., lying on top, and, chattering like a troop of monkeys in their strange foreign tongue, cleared them away in no time. The canvas was unfastened and torn off, and two or three of the planks wrenched away; and then, as we all bent forward to look down, a thick cloud of smoke rolled up, that sent us all staggering back. Something was obviously on fire, and the serang, or native boatswain, promptly untied the red cloth he wore as a belt, and, placing it over his mouth, jumped down into

the hold and vanished in the smoke. The donkey engine, which luckily still had its gear ready, was got in working order, and let its great iron claws down into the smoke. We waited anxiously to hear the serang's "Hoist away!" At last it came, and the winch drew up a harmless case of Huntley and Palmer's biscuits, which was deposited on the deck, whereupon the claws went down again. By this time everybody on board the ship had crowded round the hold, and we were getting impatient as the smoke still rose up in a mild imitation of the crater of Vesuvius. One after another the biscuit-boxes came up, and we began to fear the fire must be at the bottom of the cargo, in which case we should have had to put into Deal or Dover and discharge. However, when about a dozen packages had been got out, we knew by the extra exertions of the winch something heavier than usual was at the end of the chain; and after much creaking and groaning, a very large bale made its appearance, which we soon saw was the cause of the alarm, for thick yellow smoke was oozing out of every crack, and the turpentine of the wood was blistering and bubbling. It was laid on deck

conveniently near the pump hose, and the carpenter, with an axe, broke open the top and tore the boards off. The bale contained a mass of glowing cotton stuff, partly charred and partly burning. It was some abominable arrangement of wicks for lamps or candles, which had been soaked in tallow or oil, and being badly packed, had fermented and heated; so we simply heaved them overboard, much relieved at such a satisfactory termination of the scare.

The next morning found us off the Isle of Wight, skimming quietly over a beautifully calm sea. It was probably the last look we should get at Old England, and most of us were on deck by six o'clock, enjoying the soft, fresh morning air, and watching the sun rise up slowly into the sky. A pair of northern divers were playing about in the water, but took no notice of the ship, letting us come close up to them before they dipped, and then coming to the surface again a few yards further away. Presently we made out the houses of Freshwater among the trees, and then we steamed into the lovely bay, to send ashore our last letters and messages in charge of the Gravesend pilot.

The breakfast bell then called us down into the saloon; and when that important meal was over, we came up to find the land far away astern, the open sea ahead. We had fairly entered on our voyage. It was a day for beginning new novels and making good resolutions, lounging about on deck under the ample white awning that covered us in from the glare of the sun. The ship's officers soon proposed a lawn-tennis club, and this being considered a bright idea, we all joined at once, and paid in our subscriptions to the ship's clerk, who held the office of treasurer, secretary, and president. The officers supplied the bats, netting, and balls; and the only maritime rule we had was, that for every ball sent overboard sixpence fine should be paid. For a court we used the stern deck under the broad awning, which kept the sun off, and was a considerable help in preventing the balls going overboard, though a large number were lost every day, till we learnt by experience to play softly. Our court, too, though smooth enough as far as surface was concerned, was not always as steady as might have been desirable, and, by tipping from one side to the other with the waves, gave the balls

most perplexing twists, and caused us to play rather wildly. Thus, our first day in the Channel was spent comfortably enough, making acquaintances all round, paying a series of calls, as it were, from the armchair of one lady to that of another, exploring the vessel—a work of considerable interest—and getting the necessaries for the voyage in the way of clothing clear of unessentials in our portmanteaus. But the three following days were much rougher, and tried our sea-legs considerably. Coming on deck the second morning after leaving England, I found a stiff breeze had got up during the night, and the long blue waves of the Bay of Biscay came rolling in from the Atlantic to run dancing by us, while the rigging sang with the hum dear to a sailor's ears. The air was gloriously fresh, there seemed to be a double supply of exhilarating ozone in it, and it was a pity to notice how many of the ladies were absent from deck, kept below by that hateful foe to the travelling portion of the human race, sea-sickness.

By lunch time on the fourth day we were close under the high rocks of Cape St. Vincent, which towered above our masts. The numerous ships we had seen for many hours—some, at

first, as mere specks—were all making for this point, and if ever a path could be marked on the trackless ocean, it would surely be here, for all day long, and at all seasons, ships pass under these rocks in silent procession. The coast-guards on top, in their curious old white watch-tower, can scarcely feel dull, as they signal every ship and report her by telegraph, as she glides by to England or Gibraltar. There is deep water right up to the base of the cliffs, and the *Almora* steamed within about a quarter of a mile of them, so close that some of us on board, who did not understand how deceptive distances appear at sea to a landsman's eyes, fancied they could have thrown a biscuit to the shore. It was curious, after being out of sight of land for so long, to come so near it and then to leave it again.

The neighbourhood of Cape St. Vincent is a long line of rugged grey cliffs on the sea front, with far extending grassy downs opening in-land, where a great deal of the esparto grass, used for paper making, is grown. We had a very good sight of the long stone wall, built for the protection of the lighthouse, looking like a great snake lying curled up at the base of the

promontory. There was also a fort, with some coastguards asleep on the battlements, but it had not the appearance of much strength; in fact, as S—— said, a shell or two in it from an English ironclad would blow the whole place half-way to Madrid.

On getting out of sight of land again we tumbled about considerably, and shipped some spray, which made the ladies scream, but we were able to comfort those who were brave enough to venture from their cabins by the prospect of at least a few hours' smooth water next day in the Straits of Gibraltar.

The next morning, waking up early, we had saved our honour as prophets, for the ship steamed along as steady as a rock; nothing to be heard but the slow thump of the screw, the green reflection on our white cabin ceilings showing we were in shallow water. This flitting like a sea-bird from place to place along unknown shores, in a well-appointed ship, is a very jolly mode of travelling, much better in many ways than rattling along in cramped railway carriages, ruining your digestion with hastily snatched meals, and ruffling your temper by continually hurrying to catch trains!

The morning air was cool and fresh; the crisp little waves danced round the ship in the first early beams of the sun just rising from the sea to the eastward. On our right, towering far up into the sky, was a noble range of rugged African mountains, apparently sloping directly into the sea, and covered with luxurious green woods of cork and olives, with fleecy white clouds drifting about the highest peaks. On our left was the Spanish coast, low at this point, and less pleasing than the opposite shore, being a succession of curiously regular undulating grass downs stretching far away inland.

Thus steaming along, Gibraltar itself soon grew out of the water—a dark, towering mass, standing up so proudly, that it might well have been called one of the Pillars of Hercules,—one of the gate-posts that marked the exit from the whole known inland sea of the ancient Greeks and Carthaginians to the unexplored ocean beyond, the mournful and misty Atlantic. On the other side, with the help of the captain's telescope, I made out the small white town called by the Spaniards Ceuta, and used by them as a convict settlement; in fact, its only

inhabitants are convicts. Few soldiers are needed, as the poor wretches there live between the Moors and the deep sea—both equally inhospitable and treacherous.

The woods at the back of the little town are the native haunts of the monkeys with which Gibraltar once swarmed, but of which there are now only some dozen or so left there. It was possibly to these hills that King Solomon sent his traders for the apes which were to become royal pets, holding the place in the fashions of the day that the modern pug now occupies.

On deck we were all so interested in watching the scenery unroll, that we could hardly tear ourselves away when the breakfast bell rung at nine o'clock. However, the sea air had given us remarkably good appetites, and we eventually went below and enjoyed a steadier meal than we had shared since leaving England, the waves in the Bay of Biscay having smashed much crockery, and kept some of our passengers in their berths with "slight indisposition."

Coming on deck, again, we found ourselves just off Gibraltar, and as we were close in we had a clear view of the place, though we did

not stop, since the British India ships never call at Gibraltar unless short of water or provisions, which very rarely occurs.

"The Rock" is a curious place, but from the sea looks merely a pinnacle of brown stone, with a few white houses dotted about, and far up in the blue sky the noble British colours on the highest peak of all. The town, harbour, and batteries are all hidden from sight in the bay to the north of the promontory. I saw very little vegetation, and should not think garrison life can be very pleasant in such narrow British limits, though doubtless over the water, on Spanish ground, Nature is more lavish, and there may be found interesting scenery and people.

It is known that "the Rock" bristles all over with cannon, and is loopholed in every crag and cliff for musketry—that in fact it is a regular *boca di fuego*. From the outside, however, nothing could be more harmless than its aspect, and yet there are more than fifteen hundred big guns hidden behind the ramparts and in the galleries. It is a veritable Cerberus guarding the mouth of the Mediterranean, and inestimably valuable to our flag. Of course, we got up our guide books and turned to the

account of the peninsula; but as any one can do the same if he wants a history of the place, I will not decant a second-hand lecture.

Colonel F——, an old Indian, gave me a very good description of the place and its fortifications, as we lay back in our armchairs smoking an after-breakfast cigar. He said that, though not visible from the sea, there was a little vegetation to be found in the island, consisting chiefly of the pretty yellow-flowered Spanish broom (*Spartium junceum*), and a dwarf palm (*Chamærops humilis*) which only grows on the south face of the rock. Nothing is to be found worth shooting, except an occasional straggler from the flocks of birds that migrate to and from Africa. Scorpions and snakes are troublesome; but, after all, Colonel F—— said the "Rock scorpions" were the greater plague of the place, and on my asking for some particulars of their habits and customs, he explained that the low-caste Spaniards and Arabs were always called by that appellation. The Spanish town of Algesiras, across the bay, seems to be a delightful place, with pleasant white houses having green venetian blinds and neatly arranged paths and gardens. It is a

paradise of all who love garden flowers, the climate being as near perfection as possible, so that many of the hyacinths and tulips which supply Europe are grown here.

On the eastern side Gibraltar slopes down to the sea, being, as far as I could make out, one vast stone-shoot from Europa Point right away to the northward. Beyond, begin the splendid ranges of the Sierra Nevada mountains; and all day long we stole swiftly along the beautiful coast, but too far out to see anything except the hills themselves—a splendid rampart, rosy pink in the sunlight and deep purple in the shadow. Its highest mountain is close upon twelve thousand feet high. What a wonderful story these hills could tell of the change of time and the growth of nations! What strange and various fleets have passed under their shadows, since Hanns of Carthage made his "Periplus."

Life on board ship is well suited to meditation, and every one gets through much of it when all the books in the ship's library have been read, and the air has grown too hot for tennis. Most of us make a feeble pretence of learning Hindustani, and you hear fellows

muttering to themselves sentence after sentence of what they are pleased to consider that tongue, painfully conning ridiculous phrases from their vocabularies, which they will never need to repeat, and would not be able to remember if they did. When we get so confused with prepositions and conjunctions that we are in danger of forgetting all we have mastered, we fall back on some simple amusements, as egg-in-the-hat or sea-quoits, and struggle with immense eagerness to throw neatly made circles of thick rope into sundry fire buckets placed twenty feet away on the deck. But, after all, the most popular form of amusement is lying in a comfortable armchair with a cheroot in one's mouth and one's legs on the bulwarks, in which easy position it is delightfully natural to moralize.

When the sun goes down the temperature changes very rapidly, and we consequently regain our energies and become as lively as trout on a still summer evening. After dinner the ship's piano is brought on deck by half a dozen lascars, the folding chairs are cleared away, and all is made proper for a dance. Then we proceed to perform waltzes, polkas, any-

thing and everything in fact, round and round the deck, displaying no inconsiderable amount of ingenuity in avoiding the numerous obstacles of our mazy course, not always with complete success, as even the most dignified of officers must come to grief if he gets his foot into a coil of slack rope.

On the evening of our leaving Gibraltar, our dancing was interrupted by a distinct and remarkable eclipse of the moon. It was a beautiful night, as still and calm as could be; the sky was spangled with a thousand stars, and the moon had been shining so brightly that we had dispensed with the usual swinging lamps under the white awning aft; but gradually her light grew more and more feeble, and in the middle of an exciting "Sir Roger de Coverley" we got hopelessly mixed up, and, by common consent, made a move to midships to see what was the matter with heaven's "gas-works," as some one irreverently called the moon and planets.

The luminary of Diana was shining for the most part as brightly as usual, but had the appearance of a biscuit with a bite taken out of it. On one side there was a great semicircular gap, or rather a dark copper-coloured

disc overlapping the edge of the orb, through which we could distinctly make out the mountains and hollows of that brilliant cinder. As we gazed the disc slowly swallowed the bright silver sphere, until at last—in about half an hour, I think—it became completely veiled, and there was then a wonderful chocolate-hued moon in the sky above us. Its look was most remarkable and spectral, and the sea lay black as ink beneath, without a ripple on it, there not being even the faintest breeze; so quiet was it that we nearly cut in halves a lazy Italian felucca which had no lights, and lay helpless and immovable on the windless water. As it was, we passed within twenty yards of the little craft, but could not make out a soul on board. Possibly the crew were frightened at the eclipse, and had shut themselves under hatches to finger their beads and implore the saints; but they might, at least, have left a cabin-boy on deck, since, according to one of their own proverbs, "Heaven guards those most who guard themselves."

When the eclipse passed over the moon came out with redoubled brilliancy, and the rest of the evening was most beautiful. I took my

small new friend "**Polly**" up to the bows to look at the phosphorescence, and told her the old Indian tale about eclipses, in which the moon is a beautiful deity—young and beneficent, of course—and the shadow is a ferocious dragon called Rahu, who comes every now and then to eat up the fair divinity, but is prevented by shouts and the beating of drums and pots, which causes the timely arrival of a handsome brown-skinned edition of Perseus. I told her if she had been in the Deccan she would have heard the tom-toms beating, dogs howling and barking, children and women squealing, and a general uproar in hundreds of villages, as the superstitious Hindoos tried to frighten the terrible Rahu away from his lovely victim.

CHAPTER II.

THE MEDITERRANEAN.

I RECALL yet another night, warm as new milk, and clear as purple glass; when the great rock of Gibraltar, and Algesiras, with its bright little *casas* shining in the evening glow, were fading far behind. The silver lines of star and planet lie across the sea upon which the ship moves with her tall masts pointing to the stars and airy rigging traced against the sky. I have again the same gentle little shipmate by my side. From the bows on either side we look down and see the water a liquid mass of pale green fire, while the phosphorescent spray thrown up from the broad stem shines like broken opals. She is enchanted, and I scarcely like to tell her that all that lovely pale light is only animal matter very finely divided, and some of it in a state of decay. She thought

it was fairy illumination, and it was perhaps as near an approach to it as she will behold till she dies. The great gleaming jellyfish, far under water, that looked like burnished silver, she supposed might be the mermaids' hand-glasses, and I had to confess they looked very much like it; but when we suddenly saw two ghostly objects appear in the sea, only a few yards ahead of our ship, and without any apparent effort skim from one side to the other and twist and turn lightly here and there, she was really a little alarmed, drawing her shawl tighter over her little head, and, after gazing at them awe-struck for a minute in silence, whispering to me to know what they were. They looked rather human in shape, with small neat heads—so it seemed—but their smooth round bodies ended with a tail very much like that of a fish. They had no visible fins, or arms, or legs; and they made no motion of any sort, yet they kept silently in front of the ship, skimming through the water like sea meteors, each of them wrapped in a close-fitting robe of sea-green light where the phosphorescent water slipped against their forms. Though they moved so little as they passed gracefully

from side to side, yet the slightest effort sufficed to change their course, now descending deep down thirty feet and growing indistinct and blurred through the thickness of the sea, and then again shooting rapidly upwards and growing in brilliancy until they came to the top and ruffled the surface, breaking it into a thousand green sparkles. They were certainly the best representations of mermaids I had ever seen, and it was more difficult to convince my companion that they were only porpoises—of which I was soon persuaded—than it would have been to tell her that they were veritable sirens swimming before us, "to charm the dancing waves to sleep, with sweet sea-soothing lays."

The Spaniards say that "there are four safe and quiet harbours in the Mediterranean—June, July, August, and Port Mahon;" but during the night the wind got up, and in the morning it was blowing quite freshly, churning the Middle-Sea billows, and sending them dancing by the ship's side. Yet, as the wind was dead ahead, there was no motion on our vessel, her great length putting her astride of three or four waves at once, and her sharp bows and

vast weight sending her through crest after crest.

Early one morning, while out of sight of land, a flock of twenty or thirty swallows passed us on their way to their winter home in Africa. Poor things! It must be a long journey for such small tourists. I wonder which country they like best—the sunny South with its palms and temples, or pleasant England with its green lanes and lovely meadows. If birds feel with hearts like mortals, I expect they prefer the land where their nests are built, and where they toil to rear their twittering families. Was it not Gilbert White who believed that swallows hybernated through the winter in cracks and crannies, and even buried themselves in the mud of marshes and river sides? The idea perhaps arose from a stray swallow or martin being found in some nook—perhaps a young bird, or one injured before the time of departure. But I scarcely think any bird could hybernate right through an English winter; and that the great body of swallows do cross the seas the birds flying past us gave ample proof.

We were out of sight of land all day, and

had to content ourselves with such amusements as we could find on board—reading, smoking, and writing, varied by promenading up and down the decks, and occasional expeditions forward to have a look at our deck cargo of unfortunate sheep, all doomed to come before us sooner or later in the form of "legs" and "shoulders," etc. Experimental naturalists poked straws at some unhappy and sensitive Cochin China fowls which one of the passengers was taking out to improve the breed at Colombo. These creatures, although they had a long and easy life before them, were in a state of continual panic, and would make a terrible noise if a breaking wave sent some spray amongst them. I am afraid their imagination constantly ran upon the proceedings of the ship's cook among the less fortunate fowls. Besides the sheep and poultry, there were many crates full of ducks and pigeons piled one on top of another just forward of the engine-room. They all looked miserably uncomfortable, especially when it was wet, but the pigeons bore their fate with a quiet and gentle reserve which contrasted strongly with the noise of the irrepressible ducks, who were for ever fighting amongst them-

selves, and kept up a quacking that could be heard all over the ship, especially about feeding time.

The morning of the 25th of August found us off the coast of Africa, steaming along against a fresh head wind. When we first came up after breakfast the land was a misty purple line on the horizon, but as the time passed our course took us nearer and nearer, and the mountains and hollows unfolded before us a rich and varied panorama, which we watched as it rolled slowly along. We looked hard for a glimpse of Algeria, that "diamond set in an emerald frame," as the poetic Arabs call their steep town of white houses and green woods, but when the ship's cross-bearings were taken about mid-day we were mortified to find that we were a long way to the eastward, and must have passed the town soon after daybreak. However, the coast was beautiful—a long, serrated range of dark mountains sloping right down into the sea, and broken up and crossed in all directions by deep forest-covered ravines and gullies. Here and there we passed open clearings, where the bright green of waving corn crops could be seen amongst the olive

trees and quiet little homesteads, more Dutch than Algerian in appearance, peeping out from the terraces on the steep mountain sides. Gradually we drew near the coast until we came within a mile of the shore, with the great hills towering up into the sky above us; so close that we could see an occasional Arab wandering about in the fields, and at one time, indeed, some one raised a storm of derision by declaring he discerned a lion on the beach wagging its tail and preparing to swim off to the ship; but when opera-glasses and telescopes were turned upon the object it was found to be nothing worse than a cow that had been turned out to wander on the seacoast.

A few land birds fluttered to the ship during the day, mostly grey wagtails and shore larks; but they seemed to come from the northward, and were all tired when they first reached us, perching on the rigging or shrouds, whence they could hardly be frightened off. After a time they seemed to recover their strength, and ran about the deck, searching for insects amongst the ropes and lumber, with very few signs of fear. Fresh water seemed to be what they needed most, some of them even venturing

into the hen-coops in order to obtain a drop of the precious liquid, which certainly they had not tasted for many a long hour of flight over the sea, where it had been for them "water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink." Curiously enough, they would not leave the ship, although the land was plainly in sight about a league away to the southward. Several times I frightened them up, in the hope of starting them for the shore while it was still near; but they seemed to cling to the vessel as a harbour of refuge, and only flew round and round, with their musical call-notes, settling again in some other part of the rigging. Besides the land birds, there were here a good many large brown sea-gulls flying round the steamer—dull, heavy-winged birds of sombre hue, always sailing mournfully about, rising over the crests of the waves and skimming down the hollows, every now and then plunging after a fish, and once more following in our wake to pick up the refuse thrown overboard by the cook. There is very little to note in the way of bird or fish life on the Mediterranean. An occasional white or brown gull or so hovered round; a lively young

"basking shark," mistaking us for a marine monster, leapt out of the water while we were passing Cape Corbelin, and one solitary flying fish that we ploughed up near Gibraltar, made up the sum total of my natural history observations. But the temperature is rapidly increasing, and I watch eagerly for new forms of animal life as we run southward.

We steamed down the coast all next day, passing close under the frowning heights of a promontory, and again crossing the mouth of an inlet, where the land receded to the horizon and left us all at sea again, until late in the afternoon, when we neared the noble neck of land whose topmost point soars 3600 feet above the sea—the ancient *Treton* of Strabo and Ptolemy, and, I think, the *Metagonium prom.* of Pomponius Mela. Its French name is Cape Bougiarone, and it bears an evil reputation from the lawless character of the Arabs living in the neighbourhood. Writing of these people, an old author says, "They dwell not, like the other Kabyles, in little thatched hovels under the shelter of some forest or mountain, but in the caves of the rocks, which they have either dug for themselves or found ready made

to their hands. Upon the approach of any vessel either in course of sailing or distress of weather, these inhospitable Kabyles immediately issue out of their holes, and, covering the cliffs of the seashore with their multitudes, throw out a thousand execrable wishes that God would deliver it into their hands." Too often, indeed, their wishes have been gratified, for many a luckless ship has gone to destruction on these cold grey rocks, since the point is the most northerly part of Algeria, and must have been a terrible danger to vessels passing along Africa until the French built the noble white lighthouse which now stands on the summit, and which had caught our eyes, even in the daytime, some twenty miles before we came abreast of it.

After Cape Bougiarone we lost sight of land for a time, but enjoyed another beautiful starlight night as we passed across the mouth of the deep Gulf of Stora, on which Philippeville, the harbour of Constantine, is situated. I believe the only streams in Algeria where trout are to be found flow into the bay close to the town of Collo. Here, too, the most beautiful and valuable kinds of red coral are dredged, the rights of

fishing for which have caused some amount of bloodshed. On the 26th of August the wind went round to the west, and we ran before it all day, scarcely catching a breath of air, though the smoke from the funnel, streaming ahead, showed us there was a strong breeze blowing; but speeding with it we did not feel it. About mid-day we were crossing the entrance of a deep gulf, in which we could just make out the flat-topped houses and low mud walls of Tunis. I much wished to land and explore this classical spot, but it could not be, and we had to be contented with looking at the town through the captain's telescope. At the end of the fifteenth century Tunis owned an enormous slave-trade, and the brothers Barbarossa started a pirate fleet, which held its head-quarters here, and was long the terror of the Mediterranean. They even ventured as far as the British coast in search of slaves and booty. Fancy a real, genuine pirate in the Channel at the present date! What a hue and cry there would be! And yet as late as 1640, we read, one Reverend Devereux Spratt was seized as he embarked in a small vessel off Youghal, in Ireland, and was taken to Algiers, where he lived a long time

among the Arabs, and did much good work in Christianizing the heathen and helping the other white slaves in their troubles.

Beyond Tunis the coast loses a great deal of its rugged grandeur, and the hills become more undulating, with larger surfaces of cultivated ground; the cork and olive woods that clothe the uplands about Algeria growing scarcer. I noticed some palm trees on the sky line at one time, which interested me considerably as the first sign of approaching the veritable East.

Cape Bon was passed just before "tiffin"—as we now all begin to call the half-past one luncheon—showing a pretty little lighthouse, apparently situated at the very extreme point of a headland of shingle and loose stones.

Later on in the day we steamed close under the volcanic islands of Larger and Lesser Zimbri. The first will remain deeply impressed on my memory as a vast mass of deep grey rocks, rising straight out of the sea to a height of fifteen hundred feet or more—bare, lonely, and solemn, with light fleecy-white clouds sweeping round the topmost summits, and no sign of animal or vegetable life but the very scantiest growth of thin yellow grass on the ledges and crannies

of the crags. The other island was further away from us, but seemed to be nothing except a low reef of basalt. There were no land birds about either of them; they looked the very homes of desolation, and about as uncomfortable places to be shipwrecked upon as could well be chosen. They were, however, known haunts for sea-robbers of old, and a careful search might bring to light some interesting caves—perhaps hidden treasure or something of the kind.

The next morning I turned out at 2.30, in the hope of catching a passing sight of Malta. It was actually cold before the sun was up, the sea and sky a chill silver grey; so, after stamping up and down the deck for twenty minutes in a vain endeavour to get warm, and not seeing anything that bore the smallest resemblance to an island, I turned in again. We learnt after breakfast from the officer who kept the night watch that we had passed Malta a long way to the northward an hour before daybreak. On the afternoon of the day before, just as the sun was setting in the west, we had neared the large island of Pantellaria, now belonging to Italy, but once the " Botany Bay "

of the Romans, and the scene of a long succession of robbery and bloodshedding. It was here, some few centuries ago, that the Tunis pirates usually dropped in after an engagement to patch up their feluccas, bury their own dead, and divide their booty and slaves.

The island is larger than Zimbri, with gritty sloping grass lands coming close down to the edge of the sea. The whole western slope seems to be occupied by a curious straggling town of flat-roofed white-washed houses, packed closely together at the waterside, and defended by a mud wall all along the sea face, but higher up scattered over the hillside without any sort of arrangement, and looking at a distance exactly like a flock of sheep feeding in a hanging meadow. The chief trade of the spot consists of red and white Marsala wine, which is grown in the thriving vineyards in the interior of the island, a spot ten miles long and thirty in circumference. The natural curiosities of the place are out of all proportion to its size. First of all, there is a lake at the top of one of the highest peaks, which, like the Egyptian pool of Herodotus, seems to have no bottom, or none that any local sounding-line has ever

reached. Perhaps it is the crater of an extinct volcano, and goes right down to the bowels of the earth; or, more probably, there is some secret inlet of the sea underneath, which fills the mountain unknown to any one. But then it is not easy to understand how the water could rise to such a high level. The Straits of Gibraltar were for a long time supposed to be four or five times their real depth, until an improved system of sounding showed that the depth had been greatly magnified by two separate currents—one sweeping the line out to the Atlantic, a current of water warmed by exposure to the hot suns of the Mediterranean; and the other, a cold stream from the "mournful and misty Atlantic," flowing under the first, which drove the sounding-lead back towards the inner sea. Something of the same sort may take place in the fathomless lake of Pantellaria, but it would be interesting to know what is the true explanation. The island possesses other curiosities, of which two springs of hot water and a vast cavern are the chief; due, doubtless, to its volcanic origin. In the harbour below the town lay a large fleet of some two hundred lateen-rigged feluccas. They were the first I

had seen, excepting in a winter spent in Corsica several years before, when two ran up the beautiful Gulf of Ajaccio for shelter from a heavy north-east *mistral*. The rig dates from the most remote antiquity, and, being quite simple, was probably the earliest invented by Mediterranean man. It is very picturesque —a long tapering spar being fastened to the top of a short stiff mast, and the one great triangular sail, swelling out in front, is governed by two ropes from either extremity of the long slender yard. These feluccas are all small, and not very seaworthy I thought; but they are sufficient for the light coasting trade in which they are chiefly employed, and give a very Oriental look to a harbour.

For the next three days we had to amuse ourselves as best we could in the usual indolent fashion of steamboat travelling, as we were out of sight of land the whole time, with nothing to be seen but the blue arch of the sky overhead and the darker blue of the sea below. It is a strange feeling to be in the centre of a great waste of waters for a long time. It seems as though the ship were the whole world, and the merest trifles in the way of novelty are

eagerly welcomed. The ladies appeared to get on better than the men: they are more accustomed to laborious idleness, and their nimble fingers are always suitably employed in working crewels of extraordinary flowers for their Indian homes, or on that mysterious open-work embroidery which they manufacture by the yard, but which always vanishes directly it is ready to be worn. As for our less ready hands, we employed them for a greater part of the time in writing voluminous diaries and letters for posting on the first opportunity from Port Saïd or Suez to friends and relations in England, taking part in an occasional game of tennis or quoits.

Such trifles as the arrival of a couple of tired doves, which flew to the ship and settled in the rigging on the second day, were eagerly hailed by us; and the young ladies scattered much corn and bread-crumbs over the ship in the hope of drawing the birds down. But although they accepted lodging with us for the time, they declined the offer of free board; eventually flying round and round the ship to take a sort of parting farewell, and then making away to the southward, though not in the right direction for

the nearest point of land, which was somewhat on our starboard quarter. It is quite impossible that these birds should have seen the land they were making for at the low elevation of their flight, and as it is difficult to believe they have sufficient sense to fly by the sun, we must suppose they possess some gift of locality wanting in the higher animals. They might, perhaps, wait for a favourable wind and fly with its current. Probably they often do; but they cannot wholly rely on such means of guidance, since the smallest change would put them all out of their reckoning.

Another bird that came to the ship was a pretty crested hoopoe. It was discovered circling round and round with a short jerky flight, every now and then giving a plaintive whistle bearing some resemblance to its English name, but pronounced in a very low, musical tone. Being considered somewhat of an authority on birds and their names, I was called up to identify it, in which I had no trouble, as it would not be easy to mistake the lovely orange crest of gracefully curved feathers, the delicate banded plumage of soft black and white, and the long slender bill of glossy black. We

tried to persuade the graceful visitor to settle, so that we might observe him more closely, but though tired he was wonderfully shy, flying round the vessel with nervous wings; at one minute hovering with drooping feet over the bulwarks, and almost making up his mind to perch, but never quite screwing his courage to the sticking point—our least movement causing the bird to utter his plaintive whistle and sail away for a couple of hundred yards, whence, however, he soon came back to hover over us. He followed us for twenty or thirty miles without once venturing to rest, and then disappeared as suddenly as he had arrived.

About 6 p.m. on August 30 we were delighted to notice the deep blue-black of the sea giving way to water of the most beautifully delicate pale green tint, with the crests of the small waves, raised by a gentle south-west wind, looking golden in the low sunlight. The greenness of the water is a sign of being in soundings, and so shallow is it all along this Egyptian coast that large ships cannot approach within ten or twelve miles. The bottom is gradually but surely rising, probably by deposits of mud and sand brought down by the mighty Nile

from the interior of the continent of Africa, and some day it may be possible to annex it from the kingdom of Neptune and turn it into fresh fields for the Fellaheen of Egypt. There is a grand arena of operations open for enterprising engineers in various parts of the world, and before long I hope we shall correct a few little mistakes of Nature—turn the sea off these fertile submarine fields, and let the Atlantic into the Sahara, converting it from a howling wilderness into one of the biggest lakes in the world, across which our ships may steam and exchange the calicoes of Birmingham for the gold of Timbuctoo and the ivory of Congo. We shall soon chip a lane through the Isthmus of Panama, and draining operations of considerable extent are already progressing for banking up the outlets of the Zuyder Zee, and, after pumping it dry, handing over the rich bottom to the Herr Dutchlander.

We had seen, for a long time before getting into shallow water, a far-extending low bank of white clouds stretching along the southern horizon, flat and straight beneath, and broken and rough on the upper surface. These, the captain told us, were the invariable signs of

land, never to be noticed anywhere but over a coast; so we "unbuttoned" our eyes to the utmost, and shortly before the sun went down clearly made out some tall palm trees, looking more like mops than anything else, and then the long low line of the sandy Egyptian coast. In one place we perceived against the brilliant evening sky what seemed to be a large clump of bamboos, but on passing nearer we made them out to be a fleet of feluccas, with their black hulls hidden under the dark bank. Inland a collection of mud houses amongst some scattered groves marked the port of Damietta, on one of the mouths of the Nile; a place of no consequence except to fishing and trading boats. Just as we were going down to dinner, somebody who had been looking in the right direction exclaimed that he made out Port Saïd lighthouse. All eyes were soon turned to the point indicated, and there we could just discern a fine slender needle rising from the sea about fifteen miles ahead. An officer assured us we should be at anchor very soon after dinner, and we went below with the delightful prospect of getting a run on shore and stretching our cramped legs. Lycurgus told the Spartans

there was nothing like hunger and fatigue for seasoning their black broth, and, to adapt the stern lawmaker's words, there is nothing that makes land so pleasant as a couple of weeks on the sea; for, though agreeable enough for a time, one comes to know every plank and nail of the ship much too well, and a promenade of a couple of hundred times up and down the deck becomes monotonous after a limited number of days.

About eight o'clock we were off the twinkling lamps of Port Saïd, with the magnificent electric beam in the lighthouse shining in the darkness like a huge firefly; and after our patience had been sorely tried while waiting for a pilot to take us into the harbour, we entered, to drop anchor in the mud of Egypt.

A long avenue of red and green lanterns, fixed to floating buoys on the right and left, marked out the deep channel leading up to the anchorage, but it was so narrow that we could almost touch each lantern in turn, and we had to proceed with the utmost care. Above us the light threw out its brilliant rays, and quite entered into rivalry with the moon, which was

shining in the opposite quarter of the heavens. Ahead of us lay the flat sandy Egyptian shore, with a few scattered palms and then a crowded town of miscellaneous buildings, with innumerable lights burning, dimly visible minarets, and the masts of fifty great merchant ships all crowded together. The night was very quiet, and, as we stole softly on, the most prominent sound was the water lapping against the pilot's boat, which we were dragging along; but occasionally a scrap of a sailor-song in some foreign language, or the barking of wandering dogs, reached us, and the sounds grew louder as we neared the town. We passed a great silent Turkish ironclad, that looked very grim in the moonlight, moored so as to sweep the approaches to the canal with its heavy guns, whose muzzles we saw peeping from the turrets, and then about eleven o'clock we reached our anchorage, and came to rest within twenty yards of the long landing-place in front of the esplanade.

I had grown so accustomed to the jar of the great screw below our feet, and the continual gentle tremor which it sent through the ship from bow to stern, that when it suddenly

ceased, after two weeks of continual spinning night and day, there was a sort of feeling that something had gone wrong, and we could not at first understand why things felt so steady. Soon thirteen of us, all embryo coffee planters, were soon stowed somehow in a single fragile Egyptian boat, which had besides two remarkably dirty Italian rowers. Luckily, the harbour was as calm as a millpond; for our gunwale dipped within a couple of inches of the water, and a slight tip to either side would have swamped us and made some vacancies in the various companies we had the honour to represent. As it was, we arrived safely at the landing-place, and after some fourteen days afloat were once more on terra firma.

The first thing I noticed was the sand. We plunged into it ankle-deep before we had made half a dozen steps. Toiling through it anyhow, we gained a long well-lit boulevard with innumerable cafés and taverns all about. We visited one where some French females on a stage were singing and playing—both very badly—and tried some lager beer, which tasted much like the rinsing of old ale barrels, and for which we paid something like a shilling a

glass. After listening to two or three songs, we went out and up the principal street in the town to make some purchases, for which purpose we accepted the services of a very diminutive Arab boy with a very large reed basket, who offered to carry our things.

Some of the chief shops appear quite European in appearance and style. One huge "general store" we visited would not have been a discredit to Piccadilly or the Strand, while in another, a hatter's, we found every sort of head-gear that could be imagined—topees, pith helmets, and huge plantation hats to keep the sun from the heads of outward-bound passengers; fezzes for the shaven heads of the Faithful, turbans for high-caste Arabs, and even the hideous black silk "stove-pipe" of civilized Europe. Every one invested in a scarlet fez with a black silk tassel, perhaps as a sort of compliment to the Sultan through whose territory we were passing; besides pith helmets with puggarees, having many sorts of ingenious inventions in the crown to keep the wearer's head cool. We were not very much cheated in buying these things; but as for "spoiling the Egyptians," one would have to be very wide awake nowa-

days to do that. We found that English money passed quite freely, even down to sixpences; but sovereigns were most in demand, for each of which we obtained twenty-two rupees—two rupees more than the nominal value, owing to the depression in silver. One of our party, who somehow had a lot of French money with him, found difficulty in getting rid of it at its original value, but I do not think there would be much real obstacle in changing any amount of European currency here.

Port Saïd is strong in shops where tobacco, cigars, sham jewellery, and photographs of the neighbourhood are sold. These are generally kept by Frenchmen, and did not appear to be overflowing with superabundant respectability. The tobacco sold is usually Turkish and fairly good, though much better can be got in London; it is, however, cheaper, as there is no duty or very little. The photographs of the Canal with which every shop is stored being very good and interesting, nearly every one buys some to send back to England. But much cannot be said for the sham Turkish jewellery; it is, first of all, remarkably ugly in design, never made of the material it lays claim to be,

and more expensive than that which can be bought any day in Regent Street.

Two of us, myself and a huge Scotchman from the very far north, started off into the native quarters in search of curiosities.

Luckily the moon was shining brightly and bathing the upper parts of the whitewashed houses in silvery light, though it made the narrow streets below even more dark by comparison. As we went along through the deserted roads ankle-deep in sand, we disturbed innumerable dogs—disgusting animals, employing themselves in eating all the day's refuse and garbage of the town. They seemed to have a particular hatred of "pale faces," and snarled or howled at us as we went by in an unpleasant manner. One gaunt mangy animal came slouching after us for a long way, slinking along in the shadows behind, and barking when we stopped. The houses in the poorer parts seemed very nondescript, partly French, partly Italian, with Turkish arabesques in places; their open raised courts and circling balconies reminding one a little of Moorish villas. They were nearly all two storied, painted grey or drab to the top of the door, and the rest whitewashed.

We found a few native shops, but, as we might have guessed, they were chiefly food stores for the poorer classes, who seemed to have little superfluous cash, or inclination to spend it on ornaments or fine raiment.

These shops were nothing more than recesses under the houses, with counters across them; and upon innumerable shelves, nails, etc., on the walls were dried fish, tomatoes, melons, and artichokes stored or hung in great profusion. In one of these we spied some particularly fine water-melons hanging on a peg—beautiful great fruits with cool pale green rinds, striped with darker green. Unfortunately, although the shop was quite open, there was no one to be seen in it; but when we thought of the flaring sands of the Canal to-morrow, and then of a week of roasting in the Red Sea, we determined to have some at any cost; so we went boldly in, and we were just arranging that W—— should climb up and get them down, after which we would leave some change on the counter, when we caught sight of something wrapped up in a blue bournous with a faint resemblance to the human form, lying under a table in the corner. I gave it a poke with my stick, and it promptly

started up, showing the black face of a curly headed Nubian. The fellow had perhaps been dreaming of the bastinado, and thought we were the Khedive's officers come for him; at all events, he rubbed his eyes and took a long time to wake up and understand what we were there for. When we left the shop with half a dozen melons on a stick, he came out and stood to watch us down the moonlit street, as though he still doubted our purposes.

We obtained a good idea of the town, and from the number of doubtful houses and low drinking shops, came to the conclusion that it was just the sort of spot which might be expected from a place grown up in half a dozen years, and populated by a great concourse of French and Italians, with the Egyptian and Turkish labourers employed on the construction of the Canal.

Arriving at the outskirts of the town, where the open maidan country commenced, and nothing was to be discerned but sandy wastes in front, dotted with scrubby bushes, we saw a group of dogs gnawing the white bones of a dead buffalo, and I was just telling W—— how a young Englishman had been stabbed in the back a couple of weeks before,

somewhere in this neighbourhood, when three slouching ruffians, armed with sticks, stepped out of the shadow of a tumble-down Moorish house, and made towards us. We walked on, and, luckily perhaps for us, matters did not come to blows; but we were rather near it, for one of the men had already ranged up alongside of the hot-tempered Scotchman, and said something which was quite unintelligible, but evidently aggressive. Somebody would have had a broken head in another minute; but just at the right time a diversion appeared in the persons of two of the ship's officers, who came towards us, and the rascals, seeing the odds against them, disappeared in the shadows. They told us it was rash to go about the town late at night, except in considerable parties, and the outskirts were especially to be avoided, as they were infested with ruffians of every nationality, who had very small scruples about cutting any one's throat if there was a chance of "swag," and then tucking him away in a hole in the sandy desert. A considerable number of people had mysteriously vanished lately, and nothing was ever heard of them again. When we eventually reached the more civilized localities under

the pilotage of the officers, W—— said that if we had only been going to stay here another night, we might have made up a party to rout out some of the thieves, and have a fight on the maidan. Eventually we fell in with the rest of our party, who had been shopping busily, their little Egyptian boy with the big basket having nearly as much as he could carry. This poor little lad nearly fell into the talons of "justice;" for, while we were all in a shop purchasing various articles, two zaptiehs came along, and seeing him sitting on a doorstep close by, with a basket full of valuables by him, jumped at the conclusion that he had stolen them, and proceeded to "run him in." In vain the frightened lad explained that he was carrying them for "the Franks;" the policemen, probably with an eye to sharing the spoil between them, wanted to march him off, and if one of us had not happened to come out of the shop and to see the trio vanishing down a by-street, we should have been minus all our purchases. As it was, we quickly rescued Mustapha, and recompensed him liberally for his fright and services.

These Egyptian gendarmes are rather im-

posing to look at. Their uniform is pale sky-blue; their trousers are white on the first day of the week, but drab for the rest. They wear French military caps with peaks in front, and sword bayonets at their sides. In the daytime they stand expectorating and smoking at the street corners, and at night they collect in the open police stations, where a dozen of them may be seen with their feet on the backs of neighbouring chairs, smoking bad cigarettes and, if they can afford it, drinking absinthe. Occasionally a couple of them sally out and make a tour of the quietest and best-lit streets, but on the whole their conduct is considerably like that of Dogberry and his watch. If they meet a thief they bid him stand, and if he won't stand, they let him go.

It was past 2 a.m. when we came to the conclusion that there was nothing more to be seen or bought on shore, and went down to the landing-place, where our boat was waiting for us with the men asleep in the stern sheets. We were soon on board the *Almora*, and found that the unwonted exertion of three hours on land after a fortnight of idleness had told on us heavily. We were as sleepy as possible, and

our mattresses were soon on deck, each occupied by its owner in the usual light flannel sleeping-suits of hot countries, called in Hindustani pyjamas. Before turning in, I went forward to see the coal for the engines brought on board. It was a most curious and fantastic scene. Close alongside were moored half a dozen large open lighters, each piled with a mountain of fuel. On these boats scores of dusky forms were hard at work, filling baskets which a continuous string of Arabs and Egyptians carried up one sloping board, emptied down into the coal bunkers, and immediately returned by another sloping board for a fresh load. The moon shone brightly on the men at work in the barges, and made them look like gnomes toiling in a mine. As they came on deck the yellower light of the lanterns glittered on their naked bodies; none of them wore more than a waist-cloth, and the perspiration streaming down them cut channels in the glittering coal dust, with which their skins were thickly covered. Everything was densely sprinkled with this dust; ropes, coops, deck, were all alike jetty black, but the afterpart of the ship was protected by canvas screens, which kept the pas-

sengers from the general griminess. The coolies seemed to be working hard, though no task-masters were visible; so probably they were doing piece-work, *i.e.* getting paid by the job—always the best arrangement with Asiatics when possible, as they exert themselves to get through their allotted share, which tells both in favour of themselves and of their masters. I stood at a respectful distance, watching these streaming black figures toiling up and down the ship's sides with their heavy burdens, until at last, like Lot's wife, I was turning into a solid pillar, not of salt, but of Welsh coal, becoming in fact rapidly jet black from the crown of my fez to the soles of my boots, as the fine particles of coal settled upon my clothes; so I beat a retreat, and soon afterwards was stretched on my mattress on the saloon skylight, sleepily listening to the howling of the jackals and dogs, which kept up rival choruses until the moon went down, and the sky began to grow grey in the east with the first touch of dawn.

It seemed I had hardly fallen asleep, when my arm was lightly touched by a white-turbaned "boy" with a cup of coffee and some biscuits. "Chota hazri, sahib," he said, and

added he had woke me by order of some of the other sahibs, who were going ashore again before the ship started. It was a lovely, cool, fresh morning, with the sun just coming up over the far-stretching sand wastes on the Arabian shore. To the northward lay the limitless blue-grey sea we had so lately crossed, with a few white sails dotted about. Nearer to us was the picturesque but untidy Port Saïd on the one side, and a miniature forest of tall masts in its harbour; while beyond spread the tawny, monotonous desert, where nothing grows but stunted thorn bushes, and nothing breaks the level expanse but the white bones of camels or buffaloes that have been turned out and left to die. From amongst these shelters now and then a jackal crawled. They seemed to have been sleeping after their disgusting meals, and the increasing light disturbed them, for they came slowly forth, and, sniffing the air once or twice, slunk away with a sideling trot, keeping by instinct in the hollows and shadows.

In the town animation returned rapidly. First, a tall Arab, in a long flowing blue bournous, came down to a strip of sand close to our moorings, and proceeded to make careful

ablutions, regardless of foreign eyes. Then, having washed and dressed, he spread a small bit of gaily coloured carpet, and kneeling down on it, proceeded to say his morning prayer. He was careful to turn his face towards the spot where he supposed Mecca and the shrine of his prophet to be, but as he faced two or three points too much to the northward, let us hope it did not mar the effectiveness of his worship. Squatting on his heels, with his hands clasped in front of him, he seemed for a moment buried in thought; then, placing his hands on the sand in front of him, he bent down and touched the ground three times with his forehead. Then came a few more minutes of what appeared to be profound meditation, though doubtless the votary was repeating prayers to himself, after which he slowly turned his head to the right and to the left; a little more meditation, another deep bow to the sand, and he had finished, and jumping up, shook the dust from his carpet, and strode away over the maidân to his hut and breakfast of maize or water-melon. The perfect simplicity of the man's manner pleased me very much. It was clear he had at least believed in his prayer and the creed of which it formed a part.

Soon afterwards came a long string of camels, starting for some distant journey. Emerging from the outskirts of the town with their turtle-like heads high in the air, and their elastic step, they crossed the plain and disappeared among the sandhills.

Then, as the sun rose higher in the sky, the brown children came out of the houses to play and squabble, waking up with their noise the mongrel dogs curled up in out-of-the-way corners, and the Egyptian soldiers who had been on duty all night; while women in blue gowns and men of all nationalities poured down to the harbour, or filled the narrow streets with a strangely mixed Eastern crowd; for the day's work had fairly begun.

Finishing my coffee and biscuits, I joined a small party of passengers bound for fresh shopping, with whom I soon reached the landing-place, and we became the cynosure of a score of natives, who wanted to do anything or everything for me—and backshish. Selecting a little Egyptian girl in a blue chemise but nothing else, except a pretty face and bright eyes, I made her show me the way to the post-office, which we found at the top of the

principal street. A large crowd of men and women were fighting, and using a considerable amount of bad language, as they struggled to get at the single small pigeon-hole where the slow Government clerks were distributing letters and papers. Amongst the press I noticed one tall dignified Arab sheikh in snowy white, with snaky turban and a long staff. He made his way through the crowd like an "Indiaman," with all sail set, going through a fleet of herring boats; and reaching the wicket, rolled out some guttural names I could not catch, and received a newspaper, with which he marched off in triumph. Fancy an Arab chieftain subscribing to a newspaper, and reading it in the solitude of his desert tent! We shall have the Bedouins rinking some day, or forming lawn-tennis clubs!

By daylight Port Saïd seemed considerably less imposing than "under the moon's pale beam," but this was to be expected, while the increased animation of the streets with their busy throngs made up for the unromantic appearance of the town. The crowds were of all nationalities, but the most numerous were Arabs and Egyptians in long flowing blue or

white robes coming down to the ankles, and tied in at the waist with a gaily-coloured sash. They wore felt coverings to their heads, and carried in their hand a long straight staff, called nebut—generally taller than themselves —to help them through the sand. In the faces I passed the prevailing expression was one of short commons and hard living. The women were perhaps a little better in appearance. Their dress was much the same as that of the men, with the addition in most cases of a light black or coloured shawl folded over the head, and brought across the face just under the eyes. This is the yashmak, and must be decidedly uncomfortable in hot weather. Many wore under their face-covering a light threefold brass tube, called shetti, placed on the edge of the nose, and running up to the forehead—certainly a remarkable contrivance, and not particularly ornamental.

But of all things at Port Saïd, the little Egyptian girls are the nicest and prettiest. They wear simple blue gowns like the older women, but no face-covering. They have gentle, quiet manners, to strangers at least, and never make rude remarks about "foreign

devils," as their brothers do, but are, nevertheless, fully alive to the value of money, and always ask for four or five times as much as they expect to get. You beckon to a small damsel and request her to carry you a melon to the ship. She jumps at the prospect of the backshish, but with an eye to getting as much as possible, says, "Yes, sar, s'pose you give me five shillings." Then if you look stern and offer her twopence, she says, "Very well, sir," and up goes the melon on to her head (they carry everything there, no matter how heavy or fragile), and giving her robe a hitch up under her scarlet girdle, she steps out over the soft hot sand in a way that puts the heavier "Britisher" on his mettle to keep pace with the little guide. It is a pleasure to see her walk; she holds herself as straight as an arrow, and treads as lightly as a gazelle. The small Egyptian boys are also often bright and pretty, but regular little rogues, and both girls and boys lose their good looks only too quickly.

About nine o'clock the sun was so powerful, and I was beginning to feel so much interest in breakfast, that my little Egyptian girl was dismissed with a gift which put an extra sparkle

into her eyes, and I rowed off to the *Almora.*

At breakfast everybody had a great deal to tell, and Colonel F—— fluttered us by saying that when he returned to his cabin, half an hour ago, he was just in time to see a long stick, with a hook at the end, coming through the open port, evidently worked by a man standing in a boat outside. Both the stick and the man vanished directly, but the colonel very nearly lost some of his property, and the incident is a warning to travellers not to leave their port-holes open in harbour, or else to secure their more valuable effects.

Although we had finished coaling, there was some delay before we got off; the Canal ahead of us was full of ships, or harbour dues had not been settled. These dues, by the way, including the right of passage through the Canal, are enormously heavy. I believe we paid £1500 for tonnage and the passengers; indeed, it is this that chiefly makes the transit rates to and from India so large.

We were boarded as usual by a miscellaneous collection of cheap Jacks, mostly Frenchmen, who brought with them a large assortment of

bad jewelry and silk stuffs, for which they at first asked an enormous price, but as the time drew near for us to start they showed considerable willingness to abate their demands. Taking advantage of this, I seated myself on the bulwarks with a cigar, and proceed to bargain leisurely for some trifles I fancied. They began at a couple of guineas. When the first whistle started and the officers began to clear the decks, they stood at one guinea. But I still went on smoking indifferently, and the price rapidly grew smaller and smaller, until the last whistle sounded and the Frenchman, bundling his other wares together, pathetically asked me what I would give. I offered him the full value, eight shillings, with which he at once closed, and immediately afterwards hurried contentedly down the ladder into his boat.

Many tourists and travellers—to say nothing of all the outward and homeward bound Anglo-Indians—have long ago seen and traversed the great ditch whereby M. de Lesseps has made Africa an island. That short cut has become more important to the commerce and influence of Great Britain than any piece of water in the world, hardly excepting the Thames or the

Mersey, and at least seven-tenths of the shipping going from Port Saïd to the Red Sea flies the white or red ensign of England. I may venture therefore, even now, to say something about the Canal. It was high noon when we again felt the gentle tremor sent by the revolving screw through our ship as we slowly passed inward from Port Saïd. Getting clear of the wharf, a little plot of ground, with two or three mud shanties on it, was pointed out as boasting the proud title of British soil. This bit of land, when the Canal was in course of construction, stood valued at £800, but so little was thought of the undertaking that the patch was not bought until the Canal became a success, and then the land had so much risen in value that it was finally taken by our Government for £26,000. We crept past this and some large new buildings, where the French tricolor was gaily fluttering in the sea-breeze, and entered the mouth of the Canal. There are no gates, no locks of any sort, but the harbour gradually narrows as the steamer passes down between the town and a long line of ships in dock on the port side, until almost imperceptibly the vessel is in a narrow lane of water, with open country on

both hands. On the left stretches a well-nigh boundless plain of level drab mud—not a stone or a blade of grass breaking the vast expanse; all is of one dull unbroken colour, excepting some scattered patches of grey salt, left when the sea last subsided. On the right opens a great expanse of shallow water, connected with the Mediterranean. Along the margins and sand-banks in the centre stood long lines of flamingoes and "pelicans of the wilderness." At first it was difficult to believe they could be birds which remained so still and were in such vast numbers. They looked more like the scattered fragments of some broken white sea-wall, but through a telescope we could make out each tall bird, standing on one leg, with his head turned aside, watching, no doubt, the shoals of little fish swimming about in the neighbourhood. At a rough guess there must have been about six or seven thousand of these huge white waders in sight at once, and our sportsmen burned to make closer acquaintance with them. On the surface of the lake there were also many other kinds of water-fowl; among them the ubiquitous curlew—as wide awake and shy as his kindred are everywhere—and the lesser

stint, flying along the margins in little packs of seven or eight, but vanishing the moment they settled, their brown and grey plumage harmonizing so exactly with the mud and sand. The first five miles of the Great Ditch are as straight as an arrow—the narrow ribbon of steel-blue water stretching away over the hot brown plain like a band of iron upon a cotton bale. The banks on both sides lie very low, while the Canal itself is so narrow that to catch sight of any water at all from a ship's deck it is necessary to lean over the bulwarks, and then one perceives a few yards of liquid on either side. What impresses the mind most is the terrible ease with which the channel could be blocked by any nation that might desire it. Imagine a mutiny in India or an effective *jehad* stirring up the Mohammedans of Afghanistan and the Northern Provinces! It would then be of the utmost importance for us to command free and rapid means of transit through the Canal; but if Russia wished to put a spoke in our wheels, what would be easier than for her to send a merchant steamer with a cargo of anything conveniently heavy, and have her sunk—by accident, of course—in a

narrow part? It would stop the whole traffic for a week or more, for even an English steamer lightly aground at the bows has several times blocked the way for a couple of days. The width of the Canal ought to be doubled, and will be some day; it must also be lined with stone or concrete right through for the whole eighty miles. Its present section is curiously shaped. The bottom is seventy feet wide, or should be, though I suspect the sand drifts in considerably. On either side the banks slope up sharply for twenty feet, and then shelve off at an angle. The central channel is thus about twenty-six feet deep in the centre, with ten or twelve feet of very shallow water on either side. The effect of each steamer passing through is certainly damaging. As the vessel glides along, nearly filling up the deeper parts, her bows seem to force a body of water ahead, and the element rushes down from the shallow shelves on either side, uncovering a narrow muddy beach, where the pebbles roll over and over as they are left behind, and numerous astonished little fishes kick and splash in a vain endeavour to regain their native sphere. Then, when the ship has passed, turgid waves come tumbling

after her, scouring along under the banks, and sweeping fishes, sticks, and stones pell-mell into deep water. The fretting of the banks is thus constant, most of the loose material getting into the channel, whence it has to be laboriously removed by steam-dredgers. Although there is a nominal depth of twenty-six feet everywhere, it is found in practice that a ship drawing more than twenty-four feet is liable to come to grief. Some little time ago a large steamer with telegraph cable on board ran the gauntlet with a draught aft of twenty-four feet seven inches, but she had to steam at full speed and scraped her keel nearly the whole way through. There would have been great delay if she had stuck, as she would have had to discharge half her cargo before she could go ahead or astern. When the Canal is widened and paved with stone the exact depth will be always known, and the authorities will be able to refuse a passage to all craft exceeding the limits.

About five miles after leaving Port Saïd we come to the first station. On one bank there is a huge board with "Gare, limite nord" printed in long black letters, and a quarter of a mile away stands another board, on

which is inscribed "Gare, limite sûd." Between them the Canal runs of double width, and there appear numerous mooring-posts and buoys. The traffic is worked on the block system, as upon a well-conducted English railway. At each of these *gares* a small cottage stands for the Canal guard, connected by telegraph with the other stations up and down the line. When a ship is reported to be coming up from the next station, the caution signals—two black balls one above the other—are hoisted on the neighbouring flagstaff, and any ship that arrives downwards is obliged to stop and haul into the siding until the one approaching from the opposite direction has passed. This is, of course, a tedious affair, especially to the captains of steamers who have an eye to economizing the coal, half the value saved under a certain amount allowed by their company being their perquisite, the other half going to the chief engineer. But it is the only plan by which the Canal could be worked at all, as two ships cannot pass in any part excepting at the Bitter Lakes. Passengers seldom object, as it gives them an opportunity for some fishing

over the sides, and longer time for recovery among the victims of the *mal de mer*. We, however, were not detained at all, but went straight through several *gares*, where large Indian mail and troop ships lay waiting to see us pass. As we glided slowly by, our bulwarks only a few feet from those of the other ships, of course we all crowded to the side, and the homeward-bounds doing the same we had a curious transient glance at each other, giving and taking flying messages, etc., amid cheery badinage and bits of home or foreign news.

As we still steamed along, the banks grew higher on both sides until the surrounding country was hidden from view, and then it became really hot. The sun was high overhead, and flared down till the pitch between the planks of the deck turned soft and bubbly. The water of the Canal shone like brass, for the vessel moved between steep bare brown banks of baked mud, which reflected the heat in a way that was decidedly trying. Every now and then we passed a gap in the banks, and felt for a moment a breath of wind. But such a wind! It came panting and red-hot

across the burning desert like a blast from the gates of the lower regions, bringing with it, too, a blinding storm of hot sand, that beat against our faces, drying them into the semblance of parchment. Nearly all our passengers effected a retreat to their cabins, where they spent the time till the sun went down, lying in their berths, as lightly clad as possible, fanning themselves and drinking iced claret. But the sun is not deadly to the temperate, and, seen in its natural blaze of Egyptian light, the Canal was still a thing of immense interest; for though certainly not beautiful, it represents a splendid enterprise, and now that it is achieved it is difficult to think how the world can have got on so well without it. Fancy ever again jolting over the desert from Alexandria to Suez in an omnibus under such a sun as this! Yet that is how we used to get to the Red Sea.

At tiffin nobody could eat much. Nothing was heard but sighs and languidly toned requests for "iced pawnee," while the punkah creaked and flapped overhead, keeping the parboiled sufferers just in existence. A slice of water-melon seemed quite a prodigious meal,

and we got back on deck to find the steamer passing the station at Kantara. At this spot there is a really pretty little building on the right-hand side amongst tall palms, half-hidden in creeping vegetation and vines. It is an oasis in the desert, and at the same point an old Syrian road—once the great highway between Egypt and Palestine—is crossed by the Canal. The road is still used to some extent by the natives, picturesque groups of whom may be seen standing on the bank, waiting to be ferried over on a railed-in platform drawn from bank to bank by ropes. Here ancient and modern modes of travelling are seen working side by side. A cluster of motionless grey camels, with burdens of outlandish goods, tower up amongst burnoused and turbaned Arabs, who lean on their long staves and watch from under their bushy eyebrows the big black ship of the "Franks," with her tall masts and mazy cordage, pass silently along, moved by some invisible and magic power, coming from lands outside the orthodox world, the haunts of fog and mist, and going to the equally unknown land whence Solomon the dread king obtained his ivory and peacocks.

We were not detained at Kantara, but steaming still forwards soon passed one of the larger Arab villages on the left bank. At a little distance it was impossible to say with certainty whether the dull brown heap in a hollow of the plain near the Canal was the work of scavengers or housebuilders, but coming nearer we made it out to be a collection of a hundred tumbledown, flat-roofed mud hovels, scattered about without the smallest attempt at regularity, and varied by numerous piles of refuse, the accumulation of ages, the odour of which we could catch even a couple of hundred yards away. The architecture of these dust-heaps is of the most simple kind, as the builders, not having yet reached the art of making windows, content themselves with a door, effected by cutting a hole in the most convenient side of the square mud pile. The only inhabitants visible in the glare were a couple of camels and some ragged brown children in dirty blue garments, who ran out to gaze on us, scampering along the bank and yelling for backshish. I threw a huge "captain's" biscuit to the biggest, which was at once pounced upon by a crowd of small Egyptians, and when last seen they were

still fighting over this unheard-of luxury. All the afternoon we steamed along between the sultry banks on either hand, catching accidental glimpses, through the gaps, of a sandy desert beyond, with its scattered thorn bushes and skeletons of camels, but perceiving no signs of life save an Arab or two stalking along the Canal—his dusky black figure showing up well against the pale blue sky—or the drowsy signalmen in the station-houses. In many places the sand at the edge of the water was marked with the trails of strange water-creatures and footmarks of animals, which might be those of jackals and even gazelles, for they sometimes come down to the brink. We passed several dredging machines hard at work—huge cumbrous affairs, worked by steam, the mud being got up in an endless circle of buckets which empty themselves into a long iron shoot, whence the stuff finds its way to the adjacent plains. Greater efforts should be made to grow plants and trees upon this soil. There is already a scanty show of reeds in places along the Canal, and they materially assist in keeping the channel open by binding the sand together and preventing its slipping; but if melons or

any kinds of grasses could be persuaded to establish themselves on the neighbouring soil, the dredging machines would probably find their work much lightened.

We still went smoothly and slowly along between the banks, with the saffron hue of the Eastern afterglow lighting up the sky. We glided round numerous turns, past the ugly Château Eugénie, built for the Empress when she opened the Canal, and rarely used since—nor is it wonderful, for the sand lies banked up to the top-story windows on one side, and there can be little pleasure in inhabiting a house where your garden blows from one part to another according as the wind drifts it. At nightfall we took a final sharp turn and entered the first of the really beautiful Bitter Lakes. The steamer was now in a land-locked water—not the smallest sign of entrance or exit to be seen anywhere—dry desert all around us, excepting in one quarter, where there was quite a dense wood of palm and nebbuk trees, with white houses peeping between them. This was Ismailia, where the chief Canal officials live in preference to Port Saïd. We anchored for the night about two miles from the town, and there

were soon some half-dozen feluccas alongside, their long lateen sprits flapping against the ship's side and rigging, as the evening breeze rocked them to and fro, while their crews shouted and yelled, causing considerable confusion in the darkness. A party who went ashore gave rapturous accounts on returning of the donkey rides they had enjoyed, and of numerous adventures with dogs, jackals, Egyptian policemen, and boatmen, which made us wish, too late, we had accompanied them.

The next morning, just as the sun rose, our anchor was lifted, and after running aground once in attempting to turn, we steamed away to the southward. The water of the lake displayed the most beautiful blue-green colour, contrasting well with the spotless yellow and white of the sandy shores. Ismailia looked quite rural and pretty under the warm sunlight, amongst its green trees, with the great palace of the Viceroy towering above them. Let us hope that the groves of Ismailia will spread themselves, for these lakes, which before the Canal was opened were dry beds of salt, may now favourably influence the climate and generate the much-needed moisture. Nothing

but moisture is needed, for it is found by actual experiment that the sand of the desert, unlike the hard sand of the sea-shore, is perfectly fertile—nothing, in fact, but the "top soil" of a tract of country in a very fine state of pulverization, which will grow anything with irrigation. We now carefully picked our way down an avenue of buoys moored in the lake, and then regained the Canal. Here we seemed in fairyland. The high banks of the preceding day had vanished, and in their place spread a level tract of land on either side, broken up into thousands of little azure lakelets and bays. In the background the sand formed great smooth yellow hills, without a spot or mark of any kind upon them. In the foreground the waters had encroached upon the desert, and all around us were little lagoons and pools, of the bluest turquoise tint, though scarcely a foot deep. Little peninsulas of sand jutted into them, and little sand cliffs fringed their sides. In their centres rose liliputian sand islands, on which, encouraged by the brackish water, grasses and thorn bushes made tiny forests. In these miniature lagoons fishes great and small disported themselves, and as the rolling waves

made by our passage broke on the sandy beaches, the shining fry were thrown up on dry land, where they were quickly pounced upon by hungry sea-swallows—graceful little lavender-and-white birds—which flew on either side of the ship as she passed along. After breakfast we entered again into the region of high banks, but now they were no longer the brown clay of yesterday, but soft, bright, wind-smoothed sand sloping into the water, where grew on either side tall hedges of reeds, so near the ship I almost succeeded in picking some. Gliding past these we entered another broad lake, much larger and deeper than the last, where the land trended so far away that it became nothing but a yellow streak on the horizon; and here a pleasant breeze, with less hot sand in it than usual, fanned our faces and raised little curling waves under our bows. When the water from the Red Sea was first let into these lagoons they were in much the same state as the Dead Sea is now. The water was so densely impregnated with salt that it is said the workmen used to stick their spades upright in it (this, however, requires to be taken with even still more "salt"), while the bottom was

composed of nearly as much saline sediment as sand or mud. The French engineer took advantage of this, and saved himself more than eight feet of digging; for immediately the fresher water was admitted it diluted the solution and reabsorbed so much salt that the bottom of the lake sank many feet downwards, and thus spared half the labour of cutting a passage.

Altogether, an intelligent observer cannot but enjoy the Canal passage, and be very much impressed with the hugeness of the undertaking and the enormous amount of energy required to have kept going that army of labourers—men of all nations and tongues—and to have fed them in such a wilderness. Perhaps the only mistake connected with the great highway was the erection, at a prodigious expense, of extensive shipping docks and harbour works at Suez. These docks were built under the impression that the Canal would render that town a great emporium and coaling station, but they are now a proof of how risky it is to prophesy "until one knows;" for, instead of increasing the importance of Suez, the Canal has wellnigh ruined it. Once everybody came to Suez, when it was

the real harbour of the Red Sea and the station whence passengers and mails started across the desert for Cairo and Alexandria. But now, shorn of its glory, it sees the commerce of the world go by within arm's-length, and yet stagnates and decays for lack of trade, since few ships make use of the big harbour, Port Saïd being the real northern port, as Aden is the southern one of the Red Sea. There are several reasons why Port Saïd has thus sucked up the prosperity of Suez—the chief being that where steamers stop their passengers will land and trade become brisk, and steamers only stop where they can get coal cheapest and find the best provisions. The promoters of the Suez Docks overlooked the fact that coal-laden ships coming from England would naturally prefer to unload their cargoes at Port Saïd—thus sparing themselves four days' journey at least through the Canal and back, and saving the Canal dues, which, being very heavy, would of course add largely to the price of the coal unloaded at the southern end. It is for this reason the steamers discard the Red Sea town for the northern one, with its cheap coal and European provisions. If

M. de Lesseps only had Aladdin's lamp, he might do a useful thing by rubbing it, and, on the appearance of the Djin, getting him to remove all the harbour works from the Suez entrance to the Mediterranean port.

CHAPTER III.

ON SINBAD'S SEA.

At the sandy town of Suez our good ship did not stop for even a moment, but slackened speed just enough to permit a little snorting and puffing steam launch, with the agent on board, to overtake us. The agent brought us our English letters, and received ours for transmission to England. The letter-bags having been closed and delivered, he went down the gangway again to his steam launch, which we cast off, and then, steaming out of the Canal, picked our way amongst the dredgers, the broken-down coasting ships, etc., which were the only occupants of the docks, and finally emerged into the Red Sea. The only visible reason why it should be called Red is that, on the Egyptian side, there rises a long range of fine sandstone hills of a warm pink hue, run-

ning all along the coast. As for the sea itself, it is, of course, as blue as the heaven above it, and no more of a ruddy tint anywhere than the Black Sea is inky or the White Sea milky. The opposite shore to Suez lies as flat as a billiard table for about twenty miles all round. The guide books say that somewhere on it may be seen a wall overshadowed by trees, this being the spot where Moses rested after crossing the sea with the children of Israel. But, in fact, twenty or more places in the Gulf of Suez are pointed out as the true spots at which the Hebrew Lawgiver crossed; the most favoured one of many being about thirty miles south of Suez, where there is a good landing-place on both sides—a great cleft in the cliffs, with a sand "shoot" leading down into the water.

So few ships now pass round the West Coast of Africa and cross the equator that the time-honoured custom of receiving a visit from Neptune is occasionally moved by common consent round to the head of the Red Sea, where his majesty now ofttimes holds his court, and comes on board outward-bound ships to pay his respects and shave those passengers who

have never been through the Canal before. In the evening, after leaving Suez, we were invaded by a crowd of finny monsters, with a fishy old gentleman at their head, whose disguise could not hide the countenance of the jovial ship's doctor; while his majesty's barber, with a bucket of soapsuds and a chopper for a razor, was well played by the under steward. Besides a crowd of courtiers, there were sepoys with handcuffs for the unruly; but the "griffins" came up as their names were called, and took their shaving very quietly, while the barber cracked innumerable jokes at their expense. The young ladies were also called up to be shaved, but, as the barber said, "Beards are like ideas—men only have them when they grow up, and women never have any;" so as there was nothing to shave, they were allowed to shake hands with Neptune and hasten away; after which we had some dancing, in which the courtiers were continually tripping over each other's tails, and then fireworks were let off from the stern, during which performance the king and his retinue retired, a final blue light sent adrift in a tube which went bobbing astern being pointed out to the youngest of the pas-

sengers as "Davy Jones's" private gig taking him away. With this imposing ceremony ended our passage through the Great Ditch.

The next day was Sunday, and we had church on deck under the saloon awning, the grey-headed old captain reading the service from a desk covered with the dear flag of our country, and Mount Sinai away to the left soaring rosy and bright in the hot sunlight, while the fresh waves were running bubbling by the port-holes.

Afterwards there was fire drill, which alarmed those of the ladies who did not know it was only a make-believe. We were just dispersing after the final hymn had ended, when the fire-bell was heard ringing loudly—that sound so dreaded by sailors. Of course, there was a rush forward to see what was the matter, and we found the native crew cutting wildly about, chattering and gesticulating like monkeys. In about a minute, or less, the brass caps were screwed off the two steam-pumps, and twenty yards of tubing fixed to each, down which the water quickly made its way, throwing up little jets from every defective seam as the pressure increased, until it came to the far

end by the saloon, where a lascar was holding the nozzle overboard, or we should have been swamped. At the same time two hand-pumps were fixed on either side of the ship forward, with plenty of tubing running to the main hatch and second-class cabin, and heavy leathern pipes with perforated leaden muzzles were trailed overboard for obtaining a plentiful supply of water. Every one seemed to know his duty. The whole ship's company—including the twenty "boys" or waiters who stood in a long line at the gangway, and the carpenter, who appeared with an axe ready to break open any number of doors or hatches—had their posts, and occupied them, so that if the fire had been genuine we should have been pouring heavy volumes of water on it in less than three minutes.

When this was over the captain held an inspection of the crew, which proved an interesting spectacle. The ship's company of a large Indian steamer such as the *Almora* is a very mixed collection of human beings. To begin at the top, there are the captain and his four officers, all Englishmen. Besides these, there is the chief engineer, who ranks with the first

navigating officer, and three or four assistant engineers—all Europeans—their duty being entirely confined to the engine-room. There is also an English doctor, generally a very pleasant gentleman, who has a remarkably easy life on the outward voyage, rarely finding anything to do but lie on his back reading a novel, or perhaps once and again being called upon to feel the pulse of some young lady; though coming home he often has his hands full, attending to a cargo of fever-stricken Anglo-Indians. An upper and under steward, with an English stewardess and a ship's clerk, make up the list of Europeans.

The number of Asiatics was much larger, and their nationality more varied. First in rank was the head boatman or serang, a corruption of the Persian word for a general. His dress consisted of snowy-white trousers of the usual native cut, baggy towards the waist but very tight round the ankles, where they formed many wrinkles, and contrasted strikingly with his bare brown feet. His white jacket was tied in round the waist with a gay red scarf, and round his neck hung a silver chain with a whistle attached, on which he was able to

produce a set of signals completely understood by the crew. This distinguished individual came from Bombay, whence all the best native sailors are drawn. The two boatswain's mates —tindals in Hindustani—were clad in much the same way, and exerted themselves strenuously at the Sunday review in ranging their long line of clean-clad lascars down one side of the deck. There were some sixty of these men, whose sole duty lay in attending to the sails and gear of the ship. Not half so many English sailors would have been required; but the British physique is, of course, superior to that of the Indians, whose sole diet consists of rice and cakes, though some are glad enough to eat flesh when they can get it—even the flesh of unclean animals. The reason why the pig is considered unclean is well known. Mohammed once called a great council of the beasts and birds of the earth to hear him preach. They all attended, and so great was the eloquence of the Prophet that they with one accord were converted to the faith, with the exception of the cow and the pig, who, for reasons of their own, declined to be influenced, and entered a protest against the proceedings.

At this Mohammed was very naturally enraged, and forthwith cursed them, and proscribed their flesh to all true believers. In order to avoid the results of roughly breaking this command, the lascars have resort to a simple process. When a pig is bought by subscription or received as a present from the officers, he is conducted to the bows and slaughtered in accordance with the most orthodox rules of Islam, the butcher drawing his knife across his throat and muttering a solemn "In the name of Allah the Compassionate." The pig is at once tied by the legs to a strong rope, pitched overboard, and trailed through the water for an hour or more, after which time a lascar goes up to the line and proceeds to haul it in, saying as he does so, "Jáo su' ar, idhar áo machchi," that is, "Go away, pig; come hither, fish." After this formula the "fish" is supposed to be clean enough for all practical purposes, and is soon cut up and converted into stew.

From an officer I learnt that the crew's usual food on the voyage was rice, dried fish, and a sort of pulse called dal. When in harbour or exposed to cold weather they sometimes received a sheep or pig as a present; but he told me

that some time before he had been instructed by the managers of the company to go through the ship's books, and find the average cost of feeding the lascars each day, the result of his investigations being that the average per head per diem was only three half-pence! For this reason, amongst others, natives are employed in preference to English sailors; for, as he said, though the Englishmen are more reliable in danger and better able to work in rough weather, they require to be fed almost like passengers.

Besides the ship's lascars there are Sidi boys —regular negroes from the neighbourhood of Zanzibar—whose chief duty consists in shovelling coal into the furnaces far away down at the bottom of the ship. Probably none but they could stand the heat; but they seem to like it, and though never clean, except for parade on Sunday, they are a cheerful set, living all day in a roasting temperature, and sleeping at night on the iron grating of the engine-room or in a coal-bunker, as happily as though it were a bed of feathers. The Ag-wallas consider themselves rather superior to the Sidis, their chief duties being to do the

rough work of cleaning the machinery and acting as the hands of the English engineers. They are all Mussulmans, and mostly from the neighbourhood of Bombay, as are also the "boys" who wait in the saloon and second cabin; in fact, most Indian ships are manned by Mussulmans, as the Hindoo is generally too effeminate for rough work, and has, besides, religious scruples about crossing the kala pani, or black water, as he calls the ocean.

Though I have mentioned the "boys" last, they are the finest men, the best fed, and the smartest dressed of any natives on board the ship. As to their honesty and general behaviour I have not much to say. They are attention itself at meals, standing behind one's chair with folded arms, and watching with eagle eyes for an empty plate or glass. Being always barefooted—no Indian ever comes into the presence of a superior with his feet covered —they move about quite noiselessly, and, in fact, nothing could be better than their waiting. At off-times they are also very obliging and willing, though perhaps some of it may be due to the prospect of the tip of ten or twenty rupees which each passenger gives his own particular "boy" at the end of the voyage.

Their chief amusements are having their hair cut, or rather shaved, and playing draughts, over which they become quite absorbed. Saturday afternoon is the favourite time for the hair-cutting operations. I frequently went forward to watch the *modus operandi* at the main hatch, where the "boys" congregated. The barber, a good-looking fellow with long black cat-like whiskers, shaved the "believers" with great dexterity, but at a pace that made me thankful not to be under his hands myself. Sitting down on his heels in front of his customer, who also squatted, he gave him a little round hand-glass to watch all that was done, and then, razor in one hand and the other resting on the head of the victim, he rolled it about from side to side, and soon removed the bristles of a week's growth, taking care, however, to leave that single lock of hair above the forehead by which the Angel of Death draws true believers up to heaven. The shaving over, and the Mussulman's skull being as smooth as a cannon-ball, the barber proceeds to put the finishing touches by extracting all superfluous hairs from the ears, nose, etc., and then cracking every finger-joint in turn; nay, for a couple of cash more,

he will thump his customer all over, that being considered the most refreshing part of the whole operation. In spite of the terrible pace at which he is obliged to work to shave the whole crew in turn, he rarely makes a false stroke or inflicts a single cut.

On the whole the company of the ship was a very interesting collection of human beings, their officers seeming well contented with their work, everything being done at the proper time, and very little talking being necessary. In cold weather the natives are apt to get benumbed and stupefied, like bees in winter; but in the tropics, where the ships sail during the greater part of the time, they are as good as Europeans.

For the next two days we were out of sight of land. Happily, the sea was delightfully calm, and we got through the time pleasantly enough, lounging about on deck with novels and claret-cup, varied by tennis or quoits, till the sun went down and permitted us to begin dancing to the music which the ladies took it in turns to play us. We now began to feel genuine tropical heat and the resulting lassitude—white linen jackets and trousers for the

gentlemen, and various pretty light dresses for the ladies, coming into fashion in our little society. The ship's officers had donned their hot-weather uniform on the first Sunday after passing through the Canal, and now looked both cool and neat in snowy white, with gold buttons and bands on their sleeves. They also laid aside their blue-peaked caps, and took to broad-brimmed white pith hats of a regulation pattern, very necessary for them, as they were constantly exposed to the rays of a roasting sun. For my own part, I found nothing so comfortable as thin white flannel. It was pleasant during the day, and when the sun went down and the usual heavy dew began to fall, it saved me from the chilly feeling which many of the other "griffins" on board experienced. I am sure of this, that whatever the outside clothes are made of, it is the height of rashness to wear anything but flannel or wool next the skin in the tropics.

For a head covering anything will do, as the passengers remain under the awning all day long; but it is best to wear something light, with good ventilation, since even a temporary exposure may result in a bad headache. Those

who have never lived in the tropics can form no idea of how hot the sun is, and what an enormous power the orb has when it shines straight down. They have a vague sort of notion that it is "very warm," but perhaps they will appreciate it more if they were to remember that once or twice a steamer going through the Red Sea in the hot weather has been obliged to turn and steam against the wind, simply to save the lives of those on board. Such, of course, is an exceptional case, and as a general rule the heat will be found bearable, though no one can afford to trifle with it.

During these two or three days—the hottest we experienced—we were invaded by a considerable number of birds of all sorts, but principally swallows. Poor creatures! there was no land in sight anywhere—none within a hundred miles of the ship—and the sea was a dazzling plain of brass, painful to look at. They came to our ship in twos and threes, mostly from the eastward. The young ladies were very grieved to see them so far from home. At their request we caught several which were sitting panting on the shrouds or

bulwarks—far too much exhausted to make any resistance—and they kissed them and gave them water to drink. All day long our visitors flew twittering about under the cool white awning, snapping at occasional flies, or settling within a few feet of us as we sat reading or talking. I was not surprised to meet swallows migrating from the northern shores of the Mediterranean in August, but scarcely expected to see them crossing the Red Sea at the same time, as I should have fancied one shore would have been as habitable as the other.

Besides the swallows, we captured a large grey thrush, but the ladies would have nothing to do with him on account of his sharp black bill. Several wagtails and flycatchers were also caught, and one out of a pair of quails that flew round and round the ship for half an hour before they ventured to settle on the deck. There was also a flight of brown Assyrian doves and a fine sparrow-hawk perched high in the rigging, but though we sent a lascar up after them, he did not succeed in bringing any down, as they hopped from rope to rope when he approached. The one quail caught did not receive much hospitality at our hands,

for when his captor, a "furnace boy," learned what it was, he forthwith wrung its neck and consigned it to the cook. These quails are caught in great numbers every year along the Italian and Corsican coasts. The birds choose calm weather for their migrations, and fly at a very rapid pace a couple of feet above the level of the water. Advantage is taken of this by the Italians, who select a long strip of sandy beach where they know the quails will arrive, and fix into the sand light sticks, about four feet high, at intervals of six or seven yards for a distance of half a mile or more. On these a long net is hung so as to fall when anything strikes it. The birds come skimming over the surface of the sea, and, being too tired to look where they go, plunge headlong into the net, which at once falls over them. When the "flight" is in full swing, two men find plenty of occupation night and day in walking backwards and forwards along the net, extracting the birds and putting them in dark cages, whence they find their way to market.

Nor were birds the only objects that enlivened the tedium of the voyage, for one afternoon we suddenly found ourselves in the

centre of a large shoal of dolphins, some two or three hundred of them all rolling about like oil casks and playing round the ship. They swam wonderfully fast, in spite of their gambols, and accompanied us for several miles, looking like a troop of aquatic cavalry, but some one got up a revolver, two or three shots from which sent them all under water.

While the sun was high up in the sky, the glare on the sea was so great that no land could be seen on either side; but when the sun went down in the west, he dropped behind the craggy Libyian hills, which loomed out inky black against the pale yellow "Libyian glow," about which artists and tourists rave, and which is certainly beautiful, though scarcely equal to the crimsons and greens of a sunset in the fjelds of Norway. When the sun sank down, the hills would come out in black profile against a pink and yellow sky, and twilight would deepen rapidly; but after fifteen or twenty minutes the sky began to get brighter and brighter, till it almost seemed the sun was coming back, and then the "after-glow" faded and darkness settled down on everything—the stars glittering out one after the other till the

sky was as brilliant as the phosphorescent sea, and the dew began to fall heavily on the ship, soon soaking anything that was exposed to it.

By the 5th of September we were in the neighbourhood of "The Islands," and the water being shallow, we saw a great abundance of fishy life and many new birds. About six o'clock, when roused from my mattress on the saloon skylight by my "boy" with coffee and biscuits, the sea was alive with fishes of all sorts and sizes, and the perfect stillness of the surface enabled me to watch their various movements. The biggest fish were sharks. There were six or seven of them half a mile away on our starboard bow—but half a mile seems no distance on the open sea—rolling and plunging about in circles; every now and then one would rush up from deep under-water and throw his huge length several feet into the air, falling back with a resounding splash amid showers of spray. Fishes are usually supposed to lead a dull, pleasureless life, and few people would suspect any members of the tribe of actually romping, yet these "salt-sea robbers" were as clearly as possible having a game, and enjoying themselves in the early sunlight

before the serious business of the day began. For my part, I believe there is a great deal more in the fishy mind than most people think. Nearer us there were sundry shoals of fish about the size of the Cornish rock bass, also leaping about; but as two or three porpoises were rolling in the neighbourhood, I expect they were more bent on escaping their enemies than playing. Everything that was not amusing itself was intent upon devouring some weaker victim. In the air there were hundreds of little black-and-white sea-gulls, all pouncing upon the shoals of shining silver fry that the larger fish chased and compelled to leap into the air to avoid them, many being snapped up by the gulls before they could fall back. They seemed to be having a lively time between the fish and the birds, but perhaps it gave those that escaped a good appetite to prey in turn on yet feebler denizens of the deep. While every fish in the sea seemed to be thus dividing his energies between escaping from his pursuers in air and water, and eating as many as possible of his relations who happened to be smaller than himself, the gulls were being chased about and compelled to drop their booty by piratical-look-

ing birds that seized it before it sank in the water. The eyesight of these birds and the gulls is most acute. There were many of them sailing round the *Almora* as high, at least, as her topmasts, and on the watch for any food that might be thrown overboard. How they knew they might expect any is a difficult question, but there they were; and having nothing better to do, I fetched a long, deep sea-line, and, baiting the last hook with bacon, soon had it trailing astern. To me the tiny speck of flesh was quite lost in the bubbling caldron of foam and spray turned up by the screw and meandering far away in our wake. I had not even a notion of whereabouts it was; but the gulls high up, who could scarcely even have seen me throw it overboard, caught sight of it at once, and came plunging down like hawks, picking it up without a moment's hesitation, though they "declined the hook with thanks."

Amusing ourselves with the numerous birds and fishes around the ship, we spent another roasting hot day, steaming quietly along till about 1 p.m., when we were off the "Twelve Apostles"—a group of islands standing boldly

out from the sea in a long line, very evenly placed, and about a mile apart, like a gigantic row of nine-pins. The first one seen in coming from the northward is a mere little steeple of grey rock, with the waves dashing nearly over it; but the others are much larger—the largest of all, and the central one, seeming about a couple of miles in circumference. They appeared to be clothed with short scrub and grass in places, but generally were very craggy and steep, in many parts the cliffs rising straight out of the sea to a height of two hundred feet, while in others the sides sloped down, seamed with what looked like veins of black lava. I doubt if they are inhabited at present, but perhaps something might be made out of them—a fish-tinning manufactory might be started, for which there would be plenty of material in the surrounding sea, as we had been witnessing all the morning. If the sardine is found as low down as this, from what I have seen of the sardine fishery and preserving manufactories along the south coast of France and in Corsica, I should think these islands would be a very promising spot in which to commence operations.

We cleared the lowest of the group just at sunset, and the long line of ragged pinnacles, lit up with the last red light, formed a striking picture till darkness hid them from us. Early next morning we ran into a regular tropical downpour, though the sea was as calm as a mill-pond, and the sun just rising above the Arabian tableland. But the *Almora* was in the centre of a miniature deluge; the rain, every drop as big as a bean, beat upon the awning and ran off the edges in an unbroken sheet that quite hid the sea from view. K——, whose mattress was next mine, hearing the noise, sleepily muttered that he thought it was going to rain, but when roused, we agreed that it was a great opportunity for adding a shower bath to our usual morning tubbing; so we went forward to the main hatch, where many of the gentlemen were congregated in light costume, getting the lascars who were scrubbing the decks to pump upon them with the fire hose. This daily morning bath before most of the passengers had risen was wonderfully refreshing, and set us up for the day. The fire hose was fed by the steam-pumps with a continual jet of sea-water, something like an inch in diameter; this we used to

direct on each other in turn. Occasionally some one would haul the india-rubber tubing on top of the bridge, and, standing at the head of the narrow ladder with the hose in his hand, bid defiance to all comers. We then had to carry the position by storm; and though we won no scars in the escalade, we had our breath taken away, and swallowed a huge amount of the strong green torrent that was poured into our faces as we followed our leader, who, mop in hand, cheered us on, shouting and spluttering till he half persuaded himself he was leading a company of fusiliers against a rebel stronghold, instead of a dozen gentlemen in bathing costume to the capture of a pump.

At 7 a.m. the weather mended, and as the mist rose, we got a clear view around, and found we were steaming down a wild bare coast about ten miles on our port side. Long sandy beaches, strewn with rocks, alternated with rugged hills and precipices all the way. We tried hard to catch a glimpse of Mocha, famous for its coffee, but could not make out anything bearing resemblance to a town.

It is curious coffee should grow well in such a neighbourhood as this, but experience teaches

that a dry sandy soil, while stunting the growth of the bush and decreasing the size of the berry, greatly increases its pungency and flavour. Mocha has earned a fame which it hardly deserves. It is commonly supposed to be the native place of the famous coffee, but it is merely the emporium from which it is shipped. The chief growing grounds are on the hills of Yemen, where the plants are reared on terraces one above the other, as close together as possible, in order that the spreading branches may retain in the soil the scanty moisture which is conveyed to them by numerous artificial channels. Mocha's best trading days, however, are past, Ceylon and Southern India having "taken the wind out of its sails," and the fleets of Arab ships no longer convey the seed to Bombay for transhipment to Western Europe, as they did once.

After the neighbourhood of the ancient Arabian town was passed, the two shores—Africa on the right and Arabia on the left—closed in rapidly upon us, and we seemed to be running down to the small end of a wedge. In appearance there was little to choose between either coast, both being equally rugged and

barren—the result of the uncertain way in which the rain falls. For nine months or more, the land will be consumed with fiery heat, which reduces the soil to the condition of dust or sand. Then, perhaps, a small black cloud comes out of the horizon, spreading as it goes, till it covers the whole sky; and then "the floodgates of heaven are opened," and nine months' rain descends in three or four days, furrowing the earth with water-courses, and washing all the soil away to the hollows or the sea; in fact, just such a rain-storm as we had witnessed that morning.

Steaming down towards the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, "the Gate of Lamentation," bird and fishy life was, if possible, more plentiful and active than in the vicinity of "The Islands" the day before. The fishes especially were wonderfully lively. I went forward into the bows, and from that commanding position could see innumerable shoals all round, enjoying themselves after the rain, and rising in all parts like trout in a Scotch tarn about sunset.

Perim was reached after breakfast—the island which divides the exit of the sea into two channels. Either passage is practicable for

large ships, but the left one, being the widest, is most frequently used, and we steamed through it safely, yet had to keep the sounding-lead going, as very strong currents sweep through these narrow inlets at certain seasons, and move sand-banks from place to place in an unpleasant manner. The day may even come when they will close up the mouths and turn the Red Sea into an inland lake, as has, beyond doubt, been done at the northern end by the Mediterranean. There is so little to be said about Perim itself that every one who feels bound to mention it takes refuge in the one stock story on the topic. The story is simply this. A French commander, on his way to annex the valuable little island to "la belle France," dropped in at Aden, and spent a jovial night with the English commander. He seems to have let out some hints of his purpose, for two hours before the too-talkative Frenchman got his frigate under sail the next morning, an English gunboat had stolen out of harbour, having on board as cargo a flagstaff and a Union Jack. When the Frenchman at length arrived at the goal of his ambition, one can well imagine the *sapristis* he uttered, when his eyes caught

sight of the British flag fluttering from the summit of the highest peak in the early morning breeze. Here history merges into romance, some versions of the tale being that the French and English shook hands, and sat down to as good a breakfast as their means afforded, and others maintaining that the little episode nearly plunged the two great countries into war. Anyhow, as we passed in the *Almora* the British flag was still flying, and doubtless will fly there for ever. The only use of the island is as a foothold for a fort to dominate the straits, which, however, we have put off building. Nothing of agricultural value grows on it. It is a flat, barren, muffin-shaped place, with a dingy white lighthouse, backed by a dingier barrack in the centre. There is no soil, I believe, but a few dwarf cocoanut palms are grown in the barrack yard, and a small scrubby plant, with tiny yellow flowers, finds a scanty living amongst the cracks of the rocks. There is not even a supply of fresh water, but all wanted for drinking purposes has to be condensed from the sea-water. On the whole, I am glad I don't live at Perim.

As we left the island behind us, we emerged into the Sea of Sinbad, changing our course

from nearly due southward to a few points north of due east as we bore up for Aden, and meeting a strong breeze, which we had not felt inside, but which threw up a considerable roll in a very short time, and sent some of the ladies below; though most of the gentlemen stayed on deck, and watched the rugged Arabian coast to the northward of us pass slowly by. If the inside of the country is as uninviting as the outside, no one would desire to see more of it.

At five o'clock the same afternoon we reached Aden, and "easied" into the great land-locked bay that lies inside "Steamboat Point." Immediately we were seen approaching, long before we had finally dropped our anchor, flights of crows and kites started from the shore to inspect us, and, reaching our rigging, the former birds perched and set up an uproarious cawing to their friends on shore. This was my first introduction to the Indian crow, that famous bird which is to India what the sparrow is to England, but, indeed, even more noticeable and conspicuous than the latter. Only a little slower than the stream of kites and crows came a number of tiny canoes, impelled by Abyssinian boys, who, with a single paddle, working first

on one side and then on the other, drove their primitive log "dug-outs" over the waves to the ship, where there was soon a flock of them, all shouting at the top of their voices, "I dive, sar! I dive, sar!" till some one threw overboard two or three small silver coins. As they touched the water a dozen little blacks sprang eagerly after them, going under water like stones, totally disregarding the sharks which abound in the bay. Canoes and paddles, left to their fate, bobbed about on the water, until one by one the black heads came to the surface, and black hands held up the coins, all of which had been safely recovered from the bottom of the sea. Then, as soon as every little savage had recovered his paddle and tumbled back into the canoe, the shouting began again, "Have a dive, sar, have a dive!" till we were deafened. Some had lumps of coral or shells with them, which they brought on deck to sell, scrambling up the ship's side by a slack rope as easily as monkeys; but they asked ridiculous prices for everything in the expectation of being beaten down. Their heads were covered, in many instances, with a hard white substance a couple of inches thick, looking like china-clay. For some time I could

not make out what this was, and was more puzzled to notice that some had the usual short, curly black hair, while on other heads, though equally curly, it was tawny yellow. Afterwards I found it was owing to the lime with which they plaster their hair once every two or three months. This must be an uncomfortable process, and bleaches the hair to a dirty yellow when removed after a week or two. They were not at all bad looking, many of the little fellows having graceful forms, light-brown skins, and regular features. They are all from Somaliland, or the interior of Abyssinia, and come over in Red Sea trading vessels.

When one has mentioned that Aden is a burnt-out cinder, with, however, a good deal of warmth still left in it, and that nothing lives in the neighbourhood which can possibly avoid it, except crows and mosquitoes, all is said about it that there is to say. It is a sort of small edition of Gibraltar; only the "key of the Mediterranean" is of a pleasant neutral tint at a distance, with traces of vegetation, while this is of a torrid brown, painful to look at, without a single redeeming feature. How it came to be called Aden, which in Arabic is "Paradise"—

the Eden of the Bible—I do not know, unless the joke was committed by some unfortunate resident in a fit of sarcastic spleen. We went ashore, of course, in a large party, but we took the precaution to make a good dinner first, and gave the "cinder" time to cool down after sunset before we started.

When the moon at length arose, we hailed "No. 1 boat," and, filling our purses, tumbled in and were rowed ashore. Our crew consisted of three Abyssinian boys, pulling bow oars, and a huge big black negro from Nubia, pulling stroke. Their attire while they rowed was somewhat scanty, but before we reached the landing-place they ceased rowing for a minute or so, and, lying on their oars, produced some white linen trousers from a locker, which they leisurely proceeded to pull on, as the British police "run in" any one that is found wandering about here too scantily attired. What a wonderful power moonshine has in softening ugliness and rounding off deformity! It is sometimes useful not to know too much. Too much light spoils a great many things, Aden amongst the number, but in the uncertain, charitable rays of the moon the great pile of

lava, with its contorted strata and tall pinnacles, looked imposing enough.

Once on shore, our first thought was the post-office, which we reached only to see closed, it being then rather late in the evening; but, at the suggestion of the ship's doctor, who happened to be with us, we made for the agent's office, and soon found ourselves on an open sandy maidan, with a semicircle of white houses round one side, well lighted up, and the harbour on the other. These houses were nearly all hotels, or shops for supplying goods to the ships anchoring off Steamboat Point, mostly kept by the Parsees, who devote their lives and the large amount of wit Providence has given them to making money—"honestly if possible." The real town of Aden lies two miles away, round a jutting promontory of rock, through which there is a tunnel, shortening the distance by some half a mile for foot passengers, but as it was already late we did not think it worth while going thither. At the agent's office—a large shop where nearly everything, from postage stamps to ship's tackle, could be purchased—we stamped our letters, and then adjourned to a neighbouring hotel. We spent the remainder

of the evening discussing "Beaconsfield and Salisburys," as somebody translated B. and S., while relays of Abyssinians pulled the huge punkah overhead, or stood behind our chairs fanning us with peacock-feather fans, in expectation of the sahib's magnanimous bounty. The punkah is worth a word. It is an invention made to keep Englishmen in India as much below the boiling point as may be. In the ceiling of every room in a better-class Indian house there are strong hooks, to which short ropes are fastened, supporting a long thin teak board, which swings freely backwards and forwards. To the lower edge of the board is fastened a fringe or curtain, varying according to the tastes of the owner. Generally it is a foot or eighteen inches of brown holland with red braided borders, but sometimes the stuff is much more magnificent—pale cloth of gold, for instance, fringed with a deep border of white and scarlet flamingo feathers. From the teak board a bridle of two ropes is connected with another long cord, which passes through a hole in the wall, turns over a grooved wheel, and descends to the verandah or some other convenient place, from which it can be worked by the punkah-

wallah, who sits on his heels pulling the line back and forth. At first, to those not accustomed to the ceaseless "flap, flap" of the heavy fringe, it is apt to give them a strong inclination to go to sleep, but after a time it becomes an absolute necessity, the slow creak of the wheels mixing with the hum of the night insects outside, and the currents of cool air being so essential to one's comfort that without them, should the punkah-wallah strike, or some accident happen, the Anglo-Indian sustains a bad fit of temper. I pity the poor coolie who has the rope-pulling to do. He gets about fourpence a day; his occupation quite prevents him from going to sleep, and yet must be dreadfully somnolent work; but if he should succumb, and indulge in a peaceful "forty winks," he is generally rudely awakened by an empty soda-water bottle being thrown at him, or the butler being sent out with a stick to "oil the machinery."

Considerably after midnight, those who had taken most brandy and soda-water proposed to seize some donkeys that were standing on the maidan below our verandah, and ride in a body to the great tanks built somewhere at the back

of the island, or to scramble up to the highest peak in the neighbourhood and wait for sunrise, of which we should have a splendid view. But those who were not so full of Dutch courage, and who had chiefly confined themselves to cheroots and story-telling, were sleepy, and supported a counter proposition for getting on board and going to bed; so, after some discussion, we paid the "lawing" and walked down to the harbour, where we found our boat, and the crew asleep in her, swathed in their white bournouses.

The *Almora* was anchored just astern of a fine French frigate, the *Marseille*; so, before going on board, we ordered our boatmen to row slowly round the latter, and getting under her gleaming port-holes, we struck up the "Marseillaise," our voices rolling over the still water and awakening a wonderful echo from the rocks on shore.

> "Allons, enfants de la patrie,
> Le jour de gloire est arrivé,
> Contre nous de la tyrannie,
> L'étendard sanglant est levé:"

so we sang, till the Frenchmen came upon the stern of their vessel, and launched into a well-

sustained "God save the Queen," which they sang capitally, quite "taking the starch out" of our performance; after which *rapprochement cordiale* we cheered them, nearly swamping our boat by all standing up at once, and finally got on board our ship, where we were soon buried in much-needed slumber.

At 6.30 the next morning we were again in motion, having taken on board fifty tons of coal during the night, together with a fresh store of sheep, fowls, pigeons, etc., from the company's agents. Though we were hard up for vegetables, having almost forgotten the taste of fresh greens, none were to be procured at Aden, as the supply which flows in regularly from the Government gardens, some fifteen miles down the coast, had just come to an end the day we arrived. Vegetables and fresh water are the two things most needed in Aden. Except from the Government gardens, the first are only to be had from passing ships. As for water, all that is caught from occasional showers in the great rain-water tanks is distributed in regular quantities to the Europeans every day. A lady gets, I believe, five gallons, for washing a table, and there is a minimum for

children; while the natives have to content themselves with the insipid liquid turned out by the condensing apparatus, in which the Government turn the steam of sea-water into fresh water of poor quality. Little wonder no vegetables can be grown, nor much live stock kept, when every drop of water has to be thus accounted for!

We passed the great condensing machinery as we steamed out of the harbour, and it seemed to me that for a thing of such vital importance to the garrison in time of war it stood unduly exposed. The boilers were situated on the beach just inside Steamboat Point, with no more protection than a light wooden shed. A single shell fired into this from an enemy's ship in the bay would inevitably put the whole machinery out of gear, and then nothing would be left to fall back upon but the uncertain supply of the rain-water tanks, which are generally half empty.

On the second day from Aden we were running along the northern shore of the large island of Socotra, which appeared to be one of a group of six or seven; all the others, however, mere rocks, while the big island itself is

nearly a hundred miles long by forty across in the broadest part. It seemed a most fertile spot, with white cliffs along the seaboard and green tracts of open country further inland.

The chief trade, I believe, is in aloes, which are largely used for paper-making, and it has the dragon's blood tree, from which a medicinal gum is obtained. There is also a town and an active harbour, which we did not see, perhaps on account of a mist that obscured the land for some time. The population is about four thousand, mostly Arabs, though there are some rich Banian traders located on the hills. Although the island at present belongs to the Sultan of Keshin—of whom probably very few people have heard—we have lately made a treaty with him by which he promises never to cede Socotra to any foreign Power, and never to allow any settlement to be made upon it without the consent of the British Government, which, needless to say, would not be given, as the island lies right in the road to India. Practically, that treaty and the small annual subsidy we pay to the Sultan of Keshin places the island in our hands.

Then we lost the protection of Socotra cliffs

and the far-away Cape Guardafui, and got out into the open sea, where we soon found ourselves in for a "capful of wind," as sailors pleasantly call a good gale. It blew hard and harder every hour, till it scarcely seemed weather could be any worse. The ship keeled over and raced through the water, with huge curling waves chasing her on either side, every now and then sending a blinding shower of spray sweeping across the bows, or landing a few tons of water on the deck, where it careered about in an unruly flood, washing armchairs, cushions, novels, and everything movable, down into the lee-scuppers. Above all rose the creaking of the yards, the whistling of the wind amongst the cordage, varied by the occasional breaking of china, the quacking of the ducks, and mournful remonstrances of the inmates of the various pens and cages forward as they lurched about from side to side.

Very few remained on deck for the first day or two, but I thoroughly enjoyed the blow. It certainly was very rough—rougher than I have ever seen the sea, even in the German Ocean or the Mediterranean, even under a tearing *mistral.* The big green waves came on board of

us every five minutes, setting everything floating about the deck, and driving all persistent smokers from cover to cover like rabbits across the open. About mid-day, when the wind was end on, and we were plunging heavily through the sea, our fore square-sail gave way to an extra strong puff of wind. One moment the great sheet of white canvas was bellied out without a wrinkle in it, straining the ropes and making the spars creak, and the next we heard a sound like blasting in a stone quarry, and, looking up, saw the best part of the sail flying away down the wind like a lady's handkerchief, while all that remained on the spars was a collection of streaming ribbons that fluttered and lashed about in the gale.

This sort of thing went on for a couple of days, and then ended in soft breezes, which blew till we got into shallower water as we neared the Maldive Islands; the milder weather bringing the ladies out of their cabins one after the other—looking, alas! as if care or something else had been feeding on their "damask cheeks." But they picked up rapidly when they had breathed the fresh air for a little while and tasted several good meals. A little later we

were able to point out to them some faint threadlike things on the horizon as palm trees growing on the low coral reefs of the "hundred thousand islands," which we were rapidly approaching, and about noon we were steaming very slowly and carefully through the most southerly of the great upper group of atolls called by the general name of Lacadives.

Fortunately we got the best of passing glances at this interesting group, and were duly grateful, as steamers often keep far out in the broad "ten degrees channel" where nothing can be seen of them.

The subject of coral islands is too large, except for a glance at some of the best-known facts. Darwin divides the work of the coral-forming insects into three divisions. Firstly, ring-shaped islands having lakes of salt water in their centres, called by him atolls or lagoon islands. There are various opinions held by the learned as to the way in which these were formed, and when doctors differ the wisest thing is to let them fight the battles out themselves, but the theory most strongly supported is that which explains their circular shape by supposing the rocks on which they were

founded to have gradually sunk under them. Let us imagine there is a bare pinnacle of rock protruding slightly from the sea. The coral insects find this out and fasten round it, growing rapidly upwards and outwards. Then, if by volcanic or some other agency the rock is slowly drawn downwards, the tiny builders will run up story after story to keep themselves just "awash," and finally, when the central part disappears under water, its place will be occupied by a shallow lagoon. Afterwards the coral all round becomes covered with layer upon layer of *débris*, at first only sand or shells, but afterwards dead weeds and all the flotsam and jetsam of the currents always sweeping about the sea as the winds sweep through the air. These in course of time form a coating of soil, to which sea-birds bring scraps of floating plants they have picked up for their nests, or wandering land birds drop seeds of grain and grasses that have passed uninjured through their digestive organs; all of which sprout, and are joined by some stray cocoa-nuts thrown up high and dry, after a storm, where the beach and soil join. These grow and multiply till, in course of time, the island is undis-

tinguishable from the neighbouring mainland. To this great class of atolls belong all the Lacadive and Maldive Islands, the great Chagos Bank yet further southward, the Caroline and Low Archipelago in the Pacific, and a host of other small scattered islands such as that of Pitcairn, made famous by the mutinous crew of the *Bounty*. The other divisions enumerated by Darwin are "barrier reefs," which run along the coast of North-Eastern Australia for many hundred miles in an unbroken line; and, lastly, "fringing reefs," which border the outlines of many islands in the Pacific and China seas with a wall of coral, usually separated from the land by a broad and deep channel of water.

All these islands and reefs, which support scores of thousands of the human race and form some of the most lovely spots in the world, are the work of an exceeding delicate and minute insect, which resembles an atom of pale white jelly, and is so delicate that a difference of a very few degrees of heat or cold entirely banishes the creature from vast tracts of ocean where it might otherwise live. When circumstances favour him, he likes to be just

"awash," firmly fixed to some rock in a tropical sea with the water somewhere about 68° or 70° Fahrenheit, and no sandy sediment in the neighbourhood or muddy solution in the water—things to which he has the most profound objection. There he sits—this tiny architect of gigantic works—and for the short space of his life builds himself a diminutive stone case with the material which his waving feelers collect from the water; and then there is an end of him and he dies; his cell fills with *débris*, which consolidates, and more of his species build their homes on the relics of it. Thus, hair's-breadth by hair's-breadth, the structure grows upwards and outwards until it comes above the water, and soil collects and vegetation thrives upon it. Many of the islands amongst which we were steaming were fifty or sixty feet above water in parts, and of course this height can only be accounted for by supposing the foundations to have been gradually heaved up by some natural agency, as the coral insect could not build above the water line.

Every spot of these strangely created lands was covered with a dense forest of palm-trees,

from which the few thousand fishermen who inhabit them derive a considerable revenue in cocoa-nuts, oil, toddy, and fibre, all of which they convey in open boats to Colombo and the ports of the Indian coast. The effect of salt water at the roots of these trees is curious. In one place we approached a small atoll, with the usual forest of palms growing down to the water's edge, but one patch, about a hundred yards square, was of a dark brown colour, giving us the impression the trees had been badly burnt or singed just there, until we came quite close to the island, when it turned out that there was a small sandspit running along one part of the face, and separated from the atoll by about twenty yards of water. The palms on the older, and possibly deeper, soil of the latter were of the ordinary glossy green; while those on the sandbank, whose roots were probably deep under water, were of a dull, sombre brown, though to all appearance growing.

Besides islands and sandspits, we saw numerous nasty points and ridges of rocks sticking up from the water on all sides, enough to make the navigation very dangerous, if not

impossible after nightfall, and I dare say our captain was well satisfied when we finally got clear of them, and emerged once more into open water shortly before dark.

The rest of the voyage was delightfully pleasant. All day long we steamed across the heaving bright sea, mile after mile; until it seemed, as the sailors of Ulysses thought, we must have got round to the back of the world, where everything is open water and no land to be found anywhere. On the saloon deck the ladies settled themselves down comfortably in armchairs to mysterious fancy work, and we of the rougher division got through the time somehow with tennis, quoits, inspecting the poultry, or shooting with revolvers at a tin canister suspended from the yardarm by a long line. This latter amusement was rather exciting, and afforded much more sport than might have been expected, for the least movement of the ship—and there is, of course, always some on the calmest sea—made the canister swing, when the surest eye and quickest finger were necessary to set the tin spinning in the way which told of a hit. Sometimes we turned our battery of twelve

revolvers on the flying-fish that sprang up from under the ship's bows, and then the firing was fast and furious, but the damage done was very slight compared with the amount of powder burnt. The flying-fish had been very numerous since we left Aden, but we saw them to most advantage when the sea was perfectly calm. At other times they seemed to go deep down, only coming up to the surface occasionally in twos or threes. When, however, the sea was like a sheet of glass, and our vessel passed through the water like some great marine monster, the sight was most interesting and novel. The fish rose in scores all round us. Leaning over the ship's side, I could see far in the green depth great herds of them swimming backwards and forwards, each school under the guidance of an old and cautious leader, who had doubtless had many narrow escapes from the jaws of large members of his species or the ravenous dolphin. They would swim this way and that—now diving down till I could hardly distinguish their shadowy forms, and now coming up nearer the surface in their efforts to elude or outpace the steep black sides of the monster who had invaded their do-

minions. After a time the leader would give some sort of signal—a peculiar twist of his expressive fins perhaps—and all the shoal would turn their heads from the ship. Then I could just make out a great wriggling of tails as the fish shot upwards through the water with arrow-like rapidity. Another second and they had reached the surface, and, spreading their great side fins, their impetus carried them away over the surface of the waves with an easy, rapid flight. The distance which some of the largest and strongest fish accomplished was really astonishing; one, a fine fellow of about a pound weight, sprang out of the water just as I happened to be looking at my watch, and I took the opportunity of timing his flight, which was close upon four minutes from rise to fall. During that time it must have covered a distance of at least half a mile, which seemed a very remarkable performance, seeing the fish made no pretence to actual flying, keeping its fins out nearly at right angles from its body the whole time, and trusting to the impulse received in the starting rush through the water. This was by no means an unusually long flight; I am sure I saw several longer, which, how-

ever, were not timed. The larger fish went much further and faster than the smaller ones, few of them, however, falling back till they had "flown" at least fifty or sixty yards. This curious power which Nature has given them must be a very effectual mode of escaping from their numerous enemies in the sea, though exposing them to the attacks of the sea-birds, who drop down on them from the clouds and seize them between air and water. They certainly have the power of directing their flight, though the fact is denied in some works on natural history which would scarcely be thought to contain such mistakes. The guiding power in the flight through the air is exactly the same as that used in the water, and consists of movements of the long fine tail. In this way I have seen the fish rise up to pass over a small wave, or sink down in the hollows between two, or, after flying some way parallel to the ship's course, diverge to the right or left. Frequently they avoided breaking crests by rapid side turns which could not have been better done by swallows on the wing. As a rule, however, their flight was quite straight —nothing more than a long glide about a foot

above the surface, but offering a very curious sight when there were several hundreds on the wing at once, crossing and recrossing each other like house martins over the shallows of an English brook in summer time.

We tried several methods of fishing for them, as we were anxious to see what they were like fried, having heard very favourable reports of their edible qualities; but we did not secure one, the passage of the steamer frightening them out of their wits apparently, and putting them off their feed. However, we were never tired of watching the graceful fishes taking their flights, or staking sundry small wagers on the possibility of one old patriarch keeping up so many minutes, or which of two gleaming juveniles would first fall back to the water.

Since leaving Suez no one had thought of reposing below, everybody sleeping on deck, the ladies having all the "after skylight" to themselves, separated from the rest of the ship by a screen of canvas and Union Jacks. We used to see them flitting from their cabins below to their mattresses behind the awning like shrouded ghosts, and then things would settle down quietly in their dominions;—the lanterns

were put out, and silence held her "ancient solitary reign," broken only by occasional sounds such as the strange, melodious cry of the look-out men in the bows and on the bridge, passing the word to "keep a bright watch ahead" after every bell that rang the half-hours of nautical time. Occasionally there would be a disturbance among the sheep and poultry in the forward part of the ship, or a cock would wake up suddenly and send a solitary crow echoing over the still sea, which would rouse the ducks, who quacked out a vigorous remonstrance against being disturbed, and were in their turn upbraided by the whole flock of geese, who seemed to use very strong language. Hardly had these sounds ceased, when, perhaps, the fair sleepers on the other side of the curtain would raise an alarm of "black beetles," and we heard smothered shrieks and screams, and a dozen cries of "Throw it overboard!" "Kill it!" "Stamp on it!" "Don't hurt it!" "Call the stewardess!" etc. Of course, we all jumped up, and, though no one dared to go to the rescue, some of us pushed brooms, mops, etc., under the bottom of the curtain, while others ran to fetch the stewardess or doctor, or

anything else they could think of in the ardent chivalry of the moment. The black beetles certainly were not nice—huge, great fleshy creatures, three or four times the size of their English brethren, with an ample allowance of spiky legs and waving antennæ. They swarmed all over the ship in great numbers, and anything animal or vegetable left within their reach became speedily tainted with their unsavoury presence. They were continually spoiling our dances by putting in an appearance on the deck in the middle of some intricate figure, and frightening the ladies away to the neighbouring chairs and benches; so we showed them very little mercy, condemning all those we caught to a watery grave.

The last day of the voyage was a charming one. We were steaming along over the strangest "ground swell" I ever encountered. The sea was beautifully smooth, but as far as eye could see furrowed by long, unbroken undulations. Our course being directly at right angles to these curious vibrations of some distant storm, we at one time were apparently gliding down the gentle slope of a watery ridge for a couple of hundred yards, and then as gently steaming

up the corresponding rise for the same distance. It was quite impossible for the worst sailor to be ill under the circumstances, for there was not a speck of broken water to be seen anywhere, excepting the splashes made by the innumerable flying-fish leaping from and falling back into the sea.

About noon we made out Cape Comorin far away to the northward—two slender peaks on the horizon standing out, beyond the possibility of being mistaken for clouds, against the serene blue sky. Some one who had once landed under them described the southernmost point of the Indian peninsula as being very wild and barren—great ranges of uninhabited bare mountains, towering one above the other, and below a broad beach, sloping into the water from the very foot of the cliffs. This beach is said to present a curious appearance at a little distance, being banded very evenly with alternate black and yellow stripes of pulverized coal, of a coarse kind, and fine sand. Very beautiful and many rare shells are thickly scattered about, together with the famous "money-cowrie" and several sorts of valuable corals—all, of course, more or less broken up.

However, we had to content ourselves with watching the two little peaks until they melted into the distance as we steamed away to the southward to "make" the harbour of Colombo.

When my "boy" brought me the usual cup of coffee and biscuits the following morning, I roused myself and took a look round. We were gliding at half-speed over a bright, sunlit sea, smooth as a millpond, without a ripple anywhere. The sun was but a very little way above the horizon, not high enough to dry up the heavy dew that hung thick and sparkling all over the ship. The sky was the pleasantest of pale blues; so smooth and soft, it seemed it could never be black and frowning. But what riveted my attention at once was a long line of rugged blue mountains stretching along the eastern horizon, with a broad belt of green lowlands at their base, reaching down to the sea. That was Ceylon the beautiful, the land of pearl and amethyst, of spices and palms—"where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile."

The word that there was land in sight was soon passed down to the saloon and cabins, bringing up an excited crowd with opera-

glasses and telescopes to look at the new scenes. We divided our attention between watching for the town and harbour of Colombo, which lies low down on the coast, and admiring the ragged outline of Adam's Peak, which we made out very clearly far inland, although it is not usually seen at this time of year, the highest mountains being enveloped in the white sea-mist brought up by the south-west monsoon. This mountain peak is one of the most remarkable in the world, and every one who has any spare time in Ceylon should not fail to visit it. Although not the highest point in the island, its own stature reaching but 7420 feet, it is yet the most remarkable on account of its isolated position and the steepness of its sides, which rise from the green jungle right up to the clouds in a series of gigantic terraces.

From a religious point of view it is considered the holiest of holy spots, alike by Buddhists, Mohammedans, and Brahmans, for on the very summit there is a huge footmark sunk deep into the hard rock, where it has been "since the world was made." This is ascribed by the Buddhists to the last incarnation of Buddha, the princely hermit Gautama—and

certainly, if he lived up here he had plenty of time for thinking—while the Brahmans say it is the footstep of the holy Siva, and Mohammedans believe that Adam stood there for a few hundred years when he did penance after being expelled from the Garden of Eden. This holy footstep, or Sripada, is a depression in the face of the rock about five feet in length by some two and a half feet broad. Originally it bore only the very smallest resemblance to a human footmark, but the Buddhist priests who hold charge of it have ventured to touch it up with mortar, and, by marking the divisions of the toes and giving it a heel, have brought it now to a point of very passable resemblance to the left footprint of a vast giant. They have also erected a small temple over it, to which many pilgrims go to say the comprehensive prayer, and from these pilgrims, who climb the great peak by a long succession of stone steps and bamboo ladders, the priests derive a handsome revenue.

Those great violet mountain ranges were certainly very grand and impressive, and had I gone no nearer I should have come away with a very high opinion of the beauty of

Ceylon, but a closer acquaintance has dispelled much of the pleasure of the first early morning glimpse we caught of the island. Sidney Smith said he had two illusions left—one was the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the other was raspberry-and-currant tart. I feel for him, as I had an illusion once, and it was Ceylon. However, I am going ahead too fast.

We neared the land very rapidly, although the sea was so smooth we could hardly believe we were moving. About thirty miles from the shore we ran through a fleet of trading vessels bound back to the Maldive Islands with the money they had obtained by the sale of the fish, chank shells, and produce of the palm tree, which form the staple products of the islands. The cocoa-nut palm, in fact, is their staff of life, and nearly everything about the boats we saw was made from the palm tree. The little fleet looked very outlandish and picturesque, with flapping sails waiting for the morning breeze, as we made our way through them, and set them rocking astern of us; bearing much the same proportion to the half-decked cockle shells that a well-fed pike does to a minnow. I would certainly rather be on

board of them in a calm than in a monsoon storm, for they appear totally unfit for ocean trading; yet probably the wild-looking savages who form the crews understand the signs of the weather, and do not put out to sea unless they are sure of a fine run.

Still closer in to the land we passed through another fleet—this time of smaller boats—all busily engaged fishing with hand-line, on a long, low coral-bank that runs parallel with the coast, and has about fifteen fathoms of water on it, to supply the Colombo market with its daily supply of fish. It was a curious sight to note the naked brown figures of the fishermen in their uncouth boats, and hear their shouting and talking in unknown tongues, while they hauled up the glistening prey of all sorts and shapes, or threw overboard some refuse scraps of bait to the crowds of hungry gulls, that wheeled around with discordant cries in the air overhead. None of them made room for us, however, though a few hundred years ago the appearance of such a ship as ours would have frightened their ancestors out of their wits; and we had to pick our way very carefully through the crowd, until we at last safely emerged on

the inside of the fleet, without having done any greater harm than breaking a few lines and scaring the fish in the neighbourhood of our track. Then, as we slowly neared the land, the various details came forth one after another, and we made out tall feathery palms against the sky line, and then white houses, and lastly, a long, low, sandy beach, with a crowd of ships and boats of apparently every nation in the world, all peaceably at anchor under the guns of the white fort, from the summit of which the British flag fluttered gaily in the morning breeze.

It was only with the greatest reluctance we could tear ourselves away from the enchanting prospect, to turn our attention to such commonplace affairs as breakfast and packing up; but they both had to be transacted. However, we went below, and after a substantial meal and a little speech-making, in which our kind and attentive captain was suitably thanked by the spokesman of our party, we proceeded to put the finishing touches to our packing operations.

When I got on deck again, we were in the harbour of Colombo, which stretched round us in a deep crescent-shaped bay. To the right

ran out a rocky promontory surrounded by a strongly built English fort, in the embrasures of which we could see, even at the distance of a mile, a large number of powerful cannons pointing forth, ready to sweep the harbour if need be. Below it a long broken grey wall marked the battlements of the old fort built by the Portuguese when they held the island, but now fallen into decay, and deserted for the new and more powerful fortifications we have built. Behind the clean-looking fort we caught a glimpse of Government House, a fine four-storied white building, almost hidden in a dense mass of vivid green trees and palms, from the midst of which rose a tall flagstaff with the Union Jack fluttering out in the wind. Looking round the shores of the bay, first there was the English town of well-built white chunnam bungalows, all more than half buried in deep green foliage, and beyond the European town lay the native bazaar—a vast collection of picturesque little red-roofed huts, one storied, of course, and boasting only the simplest styles of architecture, reaching right down to the water's edge, where innumerable fishing-boats of strange forms and patterns were moored to piles or

drawn up beyond the reach of the waves. These boats extended half round the great crescent-shaped bay, until the towering palms which were dotted about very numerously among the red-roofed mud dwellings gradually grew more and more numerous, and the outskirts of the town were reached, where an unbroken forest of splendid cocoa-nut palms swept right round the north ernarm of the inlet. Above all, the brilliant sun was shining down on everything, and gave that tropical appearance to the view which must be seen to be understood.

CHAPTER IV.

CEYLON AND ITS PEOPLE.

Amongst the ships in harbour were two or three of the crazy-looking two-masted Dutch barks, painted the usual green and white; and yet, somehow or other, these creep all over the world, and are to be found in every port and inlet whence merchandise can be shipped, no matter what the latitude or longitude. Here, if their crews have read modern history, they must feel a tinge of sorrow overspreading their minds as they look at the fertile island which was once their own. Besides these, there were vessels of several other countries in the harbour; but the English ships were much the most numerous, the best built, and the best ordered of all.

No sooner had our starboard anchor gone down with a great rattling of chain, and the

ship swung into her berth, than we were stormed by the dusky crews of a dozen clumsy cargo boats that came alongside to take off our Colombo merchandise. Directly we were at rest these boats came bumping and pushing against the sides of the ship, until their crews, with a prodigious amount of shouting and fighting, had made them fast somehow or other, and then the bright-skinned Cingalese and Tamil boatmen seized the slack ropes hanging overboard, and scrambled up the sides of the ship, jumping down from the bulwarks. They were soon in apparent possession of the deck, though they happily confined themselves to the forward part of the vessel; one or two who ventured down towards the saloon, where the ladies were, being driven forward with but scant ceremony. Physically these men left very little to be desired. I had expected to find every one wearing a black skin in India on the verge of starvation, on account of the great famine that had existed for the last two years in the Madras Presidency and to the southward; and so I was pleased to see these coolies, at all events, remarkably well nourished, tall, and strongly made, many of them of good per-

sonal appearance. Although not particularly clean, they seemed to shave with great scrupulousness, never wearing the smallest vestige of hair about their faces; and when they took off the rag which was wound round their heads as a sort of apology for a turban, to mop up the perspiration which soaked their brows, I noticed that their scalps were also closely shaven. Whether their heads were newly shorn or not, all had left one long forelock just above the forehead, in order that the Angel of Death may, as has been said, take hold of it when he draws them up to heaven. The Red Indians leave just such a lock of hair growing, but with them it is not a religious form, being an act of courtesy to enable their enemies to "lift" their scalps with greater convenience when they kill them. This is very considerate!

While the swarm of black figures was hard at work unloading the fore-hold of the numerous English goods for the Colombo market, their ceaseless chatter and the fearful rattling of the energetic donkey engine drove us half wild; but we completed our packing operations, tipped our special "boys" the usual ten rupees, and then, after a hasty meal, myself and W—— pushed off

for the shore in a native canoe, after promising our friends to come back for one more dance that evening. The boat in which we embarked was a very remarkable structure, and about as uncomfortable as it was strange. As for "beam," it had none to speak of. It was constructed in this way. The bottom was formed of the trunk of a small palm tree, hollowed out, rounded off at either end, and planed smooth below. The sides of the hollow were built upward with thin planks of teak bent together at the ends, and laced one to another with numberless strong fibres of coir, passing through small holes bored opposite each other in the planks. There is scarcely a nail about the boat, the cracks being caulked with coarse tow, and the lacing of fibres giving an elasticity and springiness which could not be obtained were the construction different, and proves of the greatest service in any rough weather. The top edge of the planks, about four feet out of the water, are roughly finished off by lacing a small round bamboo along them to take off the uncomfortably sharp edges of the boards, and small seats are placed across of large split bamboos. The result is a canoe that would horrify an

English boat-builder, but which is fully equal to a spell of rough weather. Although the length is eighteen or twenty feet, the beam is not more than a foot and a half, and the seats are between three and four inches above the water, so that the rowers, and the passengers too, if they like, can let their toes dangle in the waves on either side as they go along—a luxury which would, however, be dangerous on account of the sharks which abound along the coast. But this is not all; the most curious part of the canoe being two long light bamboo poles that pass across the boat, and, being lashed to the bulwarks on either side, project eight or nine feet over the water, having a long light log of palm or some other equally buoyant wood lashed to them. The purpose of this outrigger is to prevent the boat upsetting when struck by a sea, which duty it performs so well that these apparently fragile boats venture out in weather that would swamp an ordinary craft, while their speed over smooth water is only slightly diminished.

In a proa of this peculiar construction myself and W——, whose fortunes were linked with mine for the present, started for the shore

at about 11.30 a.m., and had a fearfully hot row of three-quarters of an hour against a strong current and under a blazing sun. There was no awning to the boat, and though I had a white umbrella and a pith helmet, the latter boasted no puggaree, or linen flap hanging down behind, and the former was English made, so that the material, though all that could be desired as protection against English suns, let the fiery glare of the Indian orb through like water through a sieve. I was nearly roasted, and in much danger of sunstroke before we had threaded our way among the ships; but eventually we reached the stone steps of the landing-jetty.

To commence with, I had a very rude awakening from the ideal picture formed of Ceylon; for no sooner had we arrived within a hundred yards of the shore, than we were aware of a most fearful odour, which came to us on the hot land-wind that blows all day. This, getting worse as we approached, nearly completed the work of the roasting sun, and put us *hors de combat.* The cause was not far to seek, for on reaching the jetty we found the beach was a broad level of black putrid mud,

on which the little waves of the harbour rolled over and over a dreadful collection of garbage, dead cats and dogs, and the general refuse of a large town. The only things that seemed anything but sickened in the neighbourhood were countless flocks of Indian crows, which hopped and cawed while they feasted royally on various carrion and acted as much-needed scavengers, though every now and then a big kite would come sailing along overhead, and, spying a choice morsel in the beak of some crow, would turn silently, by a motion of his long wings, and fall swooping down with the velocity of a crossbow bolt. Scattering the cawing black scavengers right and left, he would snatch up the tempting piece of offal, and flap slowly away to eat it in some neighbouring palm tree or on the roof-ridge of a reed-thatched native hut. This was not a very promising beginning, but when once landed and on the shoreward side of the beach, things grew better, yet I shall not easily forget my first experience of the "spicy breezes" of Ceylon, though subsequently I experienced many that took the keen edge off the memory of the first.

At the bottom of the landing-jetty was a

sandy yard with warehouse sheds and custom-house offices all round. Directly opposite where we stood opened a fine gateway in the high brick wall of what had once been the outer barricade of the old Portuguese fort. This gateway had one tall central span for the bullock carts to pass through, and two narrow archways, one on either side, for the foot traffic; and it framed in very prettily a glimpse of the English town beyond, with its white houses standing amongst luxuriant green foliage.

But what struck me most were the white bullocks used for drawing the two-wheeled country carts. There were some fifty or sixty of them at the time lying or standing about the yard in all positions, some sleeping with half-closed eyes, some shaking their big ears from side to side and ruminating over the delights of inland pastures, while others stood in the shade shaking their heavy dewlaps and swinging their tails. All of them were sublimely idle; and so were the few native drivers, who were to be seen curled up under the bandies, or chewing betel-nut in shady corners. Most of the bullocks were white, though some were grey, but whatever the colour, all stood

adorned in a most extraordinary and fantastic manner by patterns and diagrams burnt into their hides with hot irons. One poor creature, who must have suffered a great deal of pain while his master was using him as a canvas for his artistic tastes, had a remarkable plant-like design starting from a point on his back, twisting and turning all over his body. There ran a couple of spiral tendrils down each leg, several things like full-blown sunflowers on either side, and every blank space left after the elaborate drawing had been finished was filled up with stars, moons, and circles. All these had been burnt into the hide long before, and must have given the animal considerable suffering, to say the least of it; but it seems a very general custom, and it is supposed to bring luck to the animals, some of which had even sentences from the holy books, and incantations, burnt into their skins in Tamil and Cingalese characters to keep off the evil eyes and save them from disease. As far as beef-making went they certainly did not look much, having no points about them which would secure the favour of an English cattle judge; but they are very fairly fitted for beasts

of draught in a land where no one ever hurries much, and where the travelling is done slowly over bad roads. The bandies or country carts were also curious constructions, designed by simplicity itself, being nothing more than a narrow platform about seven or eight feet long and two feet wide, mounted on two high wooden wheels of country make, and consequently shaky and unreliable. To protect travellers from the glare of the sun, long bamboos in most cases were bent over from side to side, and coarse cocoa-nut matting or matting of split rattan canes placed upon this, laced down with coir fibres, thus forming a rude shelter open at both ends. The single pole to which the two bullocks are attached, one on either side, had at the further end a curved yoke, which goes just in front of the hump growing above the shoulders of all these cattle, and a single strap passing under the throat is the only thing that keeps the self-willed animals in their places. They thus have perfect freedom to turn round and stare the driver in the face, if they like, and occasionally indulge in a deal of bad behaviour, but on the whole their conduct is very good, considering the treatment they receive from the

bandy-wallah, who sits on his heels at the base of the pole and holds the cord reins. Whip he has none, and when the pace gets below the regulation tramp of two or three miles an hour, he seizes the long tails of the unfortunate bullocks and proceeds to twist them round and round until the pace mends. This accounts for the knotted and dislocated appearance of some of the caudal appendages that I noticed.

Having paid off our boatmen and deposited my luggage, which had come ashore in a huge cargo boat, I and W—— set off for the Fort Hotel, which we had heard was the most comfortable and cleanest within walking distance of the harbour. We were, of course, beset by guides and beggars, many of the latter boasting of fearful diseases and distortions—they certainly seemed to be proud of them—while the guides offered to show us the way anywhere and everywhere. Now, this sort of thing is bad enough in a cool place like Paris or Rome, but here in Ceylon, with a red-hot mid-day sun glaring down on everything and making the roads and houses glitter until it was painful to look at them, and melting the marrow in one's spine, it was worse than tiresome. Before we

had been on Indian soil twenty minutes we were forced to speak roughly to the natives, and administer a few gentle pokes with our white umbrellas to the most audacious of the crew.

A walk of half a mile through avenues of tulip trees, with fine yellow-and-red flowers growing on each plant among masses of broad green leaves, and under the cool colonnades of some Government offices—where we saw through the open windows busy groups of white-clad Cingalese, with tortoise-shell combs in their hair, working numerous printing machines and setting up the type for Government despatches and proclamations—brought us to the new and only half-finished Fort Hotel, where we secured two rooms,—the only ones vacant just then, and sufficient for our wants, though certainly not very pretentious.

This hotel will doubtless improve in course of time. At present it is a bare open-roomed place, having a bar on the lower story, with a row of long-armed chairs standing against the wall, which are usually well occupied all day and most of the night by thirsty loungers, who sit smoking long Trichinopoly cheroots, their legs stretched out before them, while little black

boys run hither and thither bringing lights for the cigars, or various drinks, in which they pop great lumps of ice, frozen on the broad lakes of Canada and America, and brought across the Pacific by sailing ships. The sitting-room above is a huge place, with bare walls and floors; but the most curious thing is that, although very well furnished, when one looks up there is no flat white ceiling aloft, as in an English room, but overhead are the tiles and laths of the roof, with glimpses of sunlight stealing their way through chinks and crannies. Every now and then a squirrel may be seen making a tour of discovery along the beams and rafters, directly over the table where one sits reading or writing. The bedrooms are just as bare—mere horse stalls, in fact—as the partition walls between each room are not continued up to the ceiling, but a space of about two feet is left in order to obtain a current of air all over the house. This may be a cool arrangement, but one hears a good deal of one's neighbours splashing and tubbing, while at night a variety of snores, from the deepest to the mildest, disturb the stillness. To European eyes an Indian house seems all ventilation; privacy and

security are quite given up to this. There were no glassed windows to my room, but in their place were green blinds, which opened outwardly, and which, when shut, could be regulated to admit any amount of light by moving a long central stick. It did not afford any real security against intruders; but in India one soon loses the English habit of locking and barring everything at sundown. The crows find their way in and make themselves quite at home. When the hotel servant first showed me my bedroom, there was a crow perched on the edge of the washing jug, regarding his shadow in the water beneath with Narcissus-like satisfaction, which we rudely disturbed, and sent him cawing and fluttering out to the sheds in the yard below.

Then, after a refreshing tub, which is a great institution in India, I made my way down to the great cool *salle à manger*, and proceeded to take tiffin in solitary grandeur, as the regular meal was over; but the chief result of this was that I had the whole set of waiters to myself. It was not an unalloyed pleasure, for there were six of them in immediate attendance on me, and sundry cooks and "cook boys" hanging about

the room, or stealing glances at the latest arrival through the tatties. The punkah-wallah, when he saw me enter the room, sprang up from the shady corner, where he had been chewing betel-nut, and, spitting the juice at the lizard running along the gravel path outside, hurried to his post in the verandah and commenced to swing the long punkah waving over the table. The "boys" also put in an appearance from various quarters, shaking themselves together and setting their turbans straight, while I sat down and looked over the bill of fare. The food turned out to be, on the whole, good, commencing with fish from the coral reefs outside the harbour, very much like salmon in appearance and taste, and then some ordinary courses, ending as usual with two or three sorts of curry and "Bombay ducks."

But, on the whole, I was rather glad when the "butler boy" brought me a finger glass with roses floating in it, and asked with a deep salaam if the sahib would smoke; and tiffin was over, for the half-dozen waiters—tall Cingalese in flowing white robes, worn like the old Roman toga, and tortoise-shell combs in their hair—who stood round the table in a circle, motion-

less as statues, and watched every action, were rather embarrassing.

The crows grew also a nuisance. At first they were very amusing, but there came twenty in attendance while I was at tiffin, and goodness only knows how many more about the hotel and the compound behind the house. They sat on the rafters overhead, on the top of each open door, on the venetian blinds, on the doorsteps, all along the edge of the verandah, and everywhere else. Once or twice, while the "boys" were out of the room, an extra bold bird flew in and deliberately perched on the back of a chair on the side of the table opposite to where I was sitting; thence, after a few caws, he pounced down on a piece of bread or meat, and bore it away in triumph through the window to a neighbouring roof-ridge. It was of no use trying to scare them away, as I soon found. At one time the cawing all round was so noisy that I seized a plantain out of a dish that stood near at hand, and hurled it at a black sinner flapping and squorking on the top of the door; but instead of moving on, he saw the action in a different light, and, pouncing down on the banana, invited all his friends, far and near, to join in

the feast. The summons spread rapidly, and crows came trooping up from all parts, till there was scarcely standing room for them on the neighbouring tiles, and all the air was full of a horrible noise; so that the butler and his assistants had to rush forth, and shout and wave and throw stones, until the uproar had somewhat calmed down. Really some of these crows ought to be taken up for "disorderly conduct," or suppressed by some means. I had read a great deal about them before, but they are much blacker in every way than any one who has not seen them would believe; in fact, these fowl were nearly the only things that did not disappoint me on my first day in Ceylon.

The natives, of course, attracted a great deal of my attention during the first walk I took, and the Cingalese especially, who form by far the larger portion of the population; here in Colombo at all events. They are a very fine, muscular set, the thews and sinews of those that wore nothing but the cummerbund or waistcloth standing out very visibly from their dark limbs and forms. But most were clothed in a single long roll of white linen, twisted round the body and brought up over the left shoulder,

leaving the right arm and part of the chest bare. Some of the richer classes wear shoes on their feet with turned-up toes, and all, rich or poor, fastened their hair behind with a high tortoiseshell comb, which, sticking up from behind above their heads, gave them a curious appearance. The hair of the men was remarkably long and thick, as long as that of the women; and it was a curious sight to see a fat old gentleman in a white toga, with yellow shoes, sitting on a stone under a shady tree and leisurely combing and twisting his long raven-black tresses, which hung down to the place where his waist used to be. I passed several so employed during their afternoon siesta. It is uncertain where these Cingalese, or Ceylonese, come from, some authorities tracing them back to the Rajpoots of Hindustan, and others thinking they invaded the island from Siam. They are, however, all Buddhists, which would seem to point to Siam as their home. They believe in the five great commandments of Buddha: 1. Not to kill any living thing; 2. Not to steal; 3. Not to commit adultery; 4. Not to speak an untruth on any occasion; 5. Not to use intoxicating liquors or drugs.

They also believe in twenty-six heavens, placed one on top of another like the stories of a Chinese pagoda; but they think that at the end of the world all but four will be destroyed by whirlwinds, fires, storms, and water; which seems rather hard on those people who have only succeeded in getting half-way up the ladder. Their larger hells are thirty-four, yet besides these there are a hundred and twenty smaller ones, for the accommodation of all who have only few "peccadilloes" against their names. In these hells poor sinners are put to many sorts of ingenious tortures: one is that a man as big as three mountains, and always in a starving state, is tantalized by having a mouth no larger than the eye of the finest needle.

But the belief which attracts the most attention in Buddhism is the perpetual ascending of a soul towards the highest heaven and the culminating point of Nirvana, or absorption; or its descent down through a thousand lives of beasts, birds, fishes, and insects, to the lowest state of being, as a demon or evil spirit, than which nothing lower can be imagined. Thus, if a man lives virtuously and according to the laws of Buddha, when he dies he is born again into the heaven

next above him, where he begins life afresh and forgets all the sufferings and ambitions of the lower life, and so wins his way upwards, until he reaches the very highest bliss of Nirvana, held by some as nothingness, which surely is but a poor reward for so long a climb. In like manner the wicked go downwards through a thousand lives of various sorts, though at any time they can retrace their steps and turn upwards again by exercising virtue in that state of life which they may happen to fill. So if they are alternately good and bad, they will drift about the sea of existence like a cocoa-nut in the ocean, and perhaps after a few thousand years of such constant movement and adventure Nirvana would be welcome. There is one omission, I think, in the religion. When the soul of a man *descends* to lower levels, he remembers all that has passed in the higher existences; and so, if he was a Buddhist as a man, he must still be a Buddhist as a mouse, a flea, or whatever he may be at the time. Ought not Buddha to have laid down rules for the guidance of all the living creatures on the earth, or are his five great commandments before mentioned supposed to be sufficient for every stage of life?

But to return to the natives of Colombo after this digression about the religion of the Cingalese, who, I should say, formed at least three-fourths of the inhabitants. The next in point of numbers are the Malabaris or Hindoos, from the western coast of India, and they are especially numerous on the peninsula of Jaffnapatam, where they perhaps form the remnants of the great armies that crossed over into the island when Adam's Bridge was above water. After the Hindoos come a very considerable population of half-castes, *i.e.* the descendants of natives and Europeans, and the remnants of the Dutch and Portuguese settlers who once owned the island until served with a writ of ejectment by the British. The half-caste men fill all the light indoor employments, and are everywhere found as clerks, shopmen, billiard-markers, and such like; indeed, they abhor any hard outdoor work, as they fancy it lowers them to the level of the natives, on whom they look down. The half-caste women are often very good looking, with light-brown skins of very much the same tinge as their Portuguese sisters, with whom they live and talk. However, in the European or "white town" neither

half-castes nor natives were especially numerous, the English merchants and bankers, hurrying about under great white umbrellas and pith helmets with long puggarees streaming behind, almost outnumbering them. There were also great numbers of English soldiers and officers in spotless white uniforms with gold facings, looking very comfortable and cool, especially some dozen lounging in the verandah of the guard-room opposite the Governor-General's house. I was particularly struck with this latter building. It was just getting dusk when I approached its front face, and the sea-breeze, coming in cool and fresh from the Indian Ocean, tossed about the broad green leaves of the bananas and set the slender, feathery palms rustling and trembling. A fragrant odour from some flowering shrubs filled the air, and the fireflies, which I now saw for the first time, flitting in and out of the flowers and bushes, gave a strange new charm to the place. Otherwise I should have been tempted to call the house Italian, while the broad open porch and marble-paved square inside, adorned with a tinkling fountain and dimly burning lamps, reminded me forcibly of Alma Tadema's Roman pictures.

The twilight deepened into night so rapidly that my first tour of exploration was brought to a close almost before it had begun, and I had some difficulty in finding the way back to the hotel, which, however, was reached just in time to dress for the *table d'hôte*, whereat there sate a considerable gathering of English people, very few of whom lived in the hotel, but were bachelor citizens and officers who found the cooking more to their taste than what they could get at their own bungalows or messes. The talk was very "shoppy"—nothing but "import and export duties," or kindred subjects; so, being both sleepy and tired after the day's exertions, I made my escape as soon as possible, and sought the seclusion of my loose-box-like bedroom; but not to sleep by any means. I had somehow forgotten there were such things as mosquitoes, until reminded of the existence of those unpleasant creatures very effectually by a sharp bite. The first mosquito died; but there were hundreds more about, and before I could slip under the gauze curtains which hung round my bed, at least a dozen of the small assassins had made an attempt on me. Even then two or three of the miscreants

worked their way into the curtain at some unguarded hole, and persecuted me fearfully. If there is any truth in Buddhism, I wonder whose souls enter the bodies of these blood-thirsty little wretches?

About 1 a.m. I did drop off—probably because all the mosquitoes inside the curtains had supped heavily, and left me for a short time while they digested. But the respite was brief, for it soon began to rain, not in a civilized English drizzle, but a sudden outburst of water, as if the reservoirs of heaven were broken. The rain came down in torrents, and rushed off the eaves on to the gravel below with a continuous pour, so that it was impossible to sleep. Even the crows were disturbed, and two or three cawed wildly as they flapped about in the outside darkness trying to find shelter somewhere. The rain beat so violently on the red tiles overhead as to wash two or three off; and I heard the water coming down in my neighbour's room, and him springing from the protection of his bed-curtains to call loudly for a "boy." Then there was considerable excitement amongst a family of little brown-striped squirrels, who perhaps had made their nest in

the rain-water pipes under the eaves; at all events, something seemed to have gone wrong with them, as they set up a most prodigious chirrupping and squeaking, and rushed frantically backwards and forwards about the beams overhead, under the impression that the hours of the world were numbered, and Buddha was already destroying the six lower heavens, as is written in the sacred books that it shall be. So the night passed, with torrents of rain broken by bright flashes of lightning that gleamed through the bars of my venetian blinds every few minutes, and were followed by thunder, which seemed as if explosions of dynamite were going off in rapid succession only a few feet above the roof. But at last the welcome dawn came, the rain stopped, and I must have seized this opportunity to snatch a brief slumber, for when I woke up the sun was shining brightly through the open windows, and my particular "boy," who had thrown them wide to wake me, was busy getting my bath-tub ready.

The 16th being Sunday, it was a *dies non* for sight-seeing. There was, however, some amusement to be had by watching the motley groups of natives, Canarese, Tamils, and Cin-

galese, etc., passing up and down the road, and the various kinds of bullock-carts and carriages carrying holiday-making natives out into the country. The weekly day of rest of the Englishmen is also a holiday, whether they wish it or not, for a great number of natives employed in the numerous Government offices. The air was very pleasantly cool, and the earth very fragrant after the last night's rain, so I spent the best part of the morning at the window. Directly in front of the hotel there were two very striking trees—one with pale green fern-like leaves, and a profusion of the most vivid crimson flowers growing on every foot of leafy surface, and the other a dense pyramid of dark green foliage, dotted over with cascades of lovely white jasmine-like blossoms. Hitherto the botany of the island had not much impressed me; the palms and the bananas or plantains being the only plants which force themselves upon the stranger's notice. Neither had I seen much new in bird or insect life. Kites and crows there are by hundreds everywhere, and the sparrow is to be noted occasionally, exactly the same sort of bird as his English brother, but boasting a whiter shirt-

front. As for insects, a large handsome black-and-red butterfly was flitting all day among the jasmine flowers over the way, but that and a small yellow one were the only species at all conspicuous.

In the afternoon I and W—— sallied out to explore the Cingalese town, which lies to the northward of the bay. It is difficult to describe a native street to those who have never seen one. There is always a mass of life and animation about the scene, a jostling crowd of bright robed men and women—not perhaps particularly clean, but always picturesque in their gay turbans and flowing sarees—and then there are slowly moving bandies drawn by white bullocks, who meander at their leisure down the centre of the roadway, while their driver squats on his heels at the base of the pole. Men with burdens of all sorts and shapes also monopolize much of the narrow space, and trot along with strange cries, addressed to their "sisters" and "brothers," to clear the road. An astonishing number of babies will surely be seen sprawling and playing in the hot dust; very strange little creatures they are, their attire consisting of innocency, and a string round their waists with

a few beads or charms strung upon it. Their heads are kept close shaven, except one long black forelock, just on the middle of their scalp, which gives them a very comical look. On the whole, they are not bad looking, many of them possessing pretty faces and bright black eyes.

The native shops are curious, and quite unlike European ones. They are nothing but dark little dens facing the street, where the merchant sits, surrounded by his goods, cross-legged on his own counter. Having everything near at hand, he rarely needs to get up, unless he rises to serve a more than usually distinguished customer. It is to be feared that the honesty of these traders is not too great. Their only idea seemed to be to obtain as much for each article as possible, without any pretence of caring for what its real value might be. For instance, W—— set his heart on having a large single-bladed hunting-knife with a safety spring, which the merchant assured us in broken English he had made himself, but on the back whereof I saw "Birmingham" stamped —a mark he had not noticed, or, more probably, could not understand. For this knife he asked Rs. 7—about fourteen shillings—and a

bargain would have been forthwith struck, only I persuaded W—— to come a little further and see if the article could not be got cheaper; so we went on down the native bazaar, and stopped at every cutler's, until we came to a shop where exactly the same sort of knife was to be had for Rs. 2.8. We went back, and, after telling the original merchant of this, offered him Rs. 2 for the article he had a few minutes before valued at Rs. 7, and he accepted the offer without appearing in the least discomposed.

We were very much disappointed with what we saw for sale on the stalls. Here, at least, in the chief city of Ceylon and in the native quarter, I had hoped to find some curious and novel articles of Indian manufacture, but little was to be marked except the cheapest and most trashy productions of Manchester and Birmingham, mixed up with French and German goods, which, from their utter worthlessness, it seemed would not find a market in the poorest of European towns. The native cutlery shops were full of badly made English knives and general ironmongery, and the "dry goods" stores had great displays of Manchester cotton articles.

The only shops where any originality could be observed were those of the pottery and the fruit and seed sellers. The dealers in earthenware sat amongst heaps of red clay vessels and jars of all sizes and shapes. Here we saw the universal chatty, which, though differing slightly in form and shape, and being sometimes made of clay and sometimes of brass, is to be found all over the length and breadth of India and Ceylon, and is made exactly in the same way as it was two thousand years ago. The general form is rather graceful, with a round body and a narrow neck, but there are all sorts and sizes, suitable to the various domestic purposes for which they are intended. I noticed one ingenious little article in these shops—a hollow globe of red clay with no opening but a single narrow slit, intended for a money box, to be filled with half-annas by some little peasant studying domestic economy, and when full to be broken up on some marriage feast.

After a long afternoon spent in wandering about the native town and the palm groves beyond, we retraced our steps to the hotel, and passed the rest of the time writing letters home

and bringing up diaries, etc., in the bare white-washed sitting-room of the hotel.

One thing strikes the new-comer on his very first evening in an Indian house, and it is the lizards. Fancy the excitement there would be in a London drawing-room if even a single lacertan were to be observed stalking flies on the walls of the room, and yet here nothing is thought of a score of reptiles so engaged. Immediately it grows dusk and the palm-oil lamps are lit, they come from the crannies of the roof, where they have been dozing out the day, and commence a diligent search for food on the broad white expanse of their "happy hunting grounds." It does not seem to make the smallest difference to them what their position is, or whether their head or tail be uppermost—they lay their plans just as deeply when they are topsy-turvy as in any other attitude. When they espy a fly asleep on the horizon, they make tracks for him. I saw a smart little grey lizard start after a fly perched on the wall at the farthest corner of the room. The lizard at first approached his victim rapidly until the intervening space was very much reduced, and then he began to

slacken his speed. Finding he was nearing the fly from a quarter whence he could be seen, he "fetched a compass" of a couple of feet, and got round to the rear of his victim. Then he began to approach more slowly, and when only a few inches away, he proceeded with the utmost caution, placing first one paw down and then the other, until he came within an inch of the unconscious victim. There was a pause for a moment, a sudden spring forward, and the fly had gone and the lizard was gulping something down his throat with every appearance of satisfaction. They rarely miss their aim, and are most expert stalkers, so the good which a score or two must do, feeding all night on the mosquitoes and flies, must be considerable.

The next morning I rose early to walk over to the Museum and Botanical Gardens, which are well worth a visit. My way led me through the eastern portion of the native town, and getting lost at one time in a labyrinth of lanes, I saw a good deal of native modes of living and habits, which were occasionally more peculiar than pleasant; but the bright sun overhead, and the gay colours which glanced

out from amongst the raggedest crowd, softened down the appearance of squalor and ennobled even dirt. There was the usual profusion of native fruits and vegetables in the bazaars, and the dry goods were, as I had noticed yesterday, nearly all of English manufacture; even the little native children were enjoying themselves in the hot dust with empty sardine-boxes, which they were towing about with string as miniature carts, while Peak and Frean biscuit-boxes were put to a multitude of domestic purposes.

Just outside the town there is a broad sheet of water with a palm-covered island in the centre. It cannot improve the health of the place, as it does not seem particularly clean; but there it stands, and is largely used by the natives for washing both themselves and the linen of the Europeans. A line of rails runs round this lake, and while walking along the road a curious accident happened. A dhoby, or washerman (all the washing is done out here by men, of course), had been hard at work washing the linen of some English family, and, having got through early, had placed all the clean things in his basket, which he had deposited on the line of railway while he went

away to chew betel-nut or something of the kind. No sooner had the luckless man gone out of sight behind some native huts, than an engine and tender came along at full speed, and dashed headlong into the basket, which was thrown into the air, discharging its "white confusion" like a bursting shell. The engine flew through the cloud of linen, and the next moment rushed by me with a variety of useful articles of attire streaming out in the air from the funnel and various parts to which they had stuck, while the remainder were torn to shreds amongst the wheels underneath.

I found myself at last in the gardens of the Museum, which were crowded with a variety of strange and new shrubs and plants, and alive with birds and butterflies. These gardens alone were amply sufficient for one morning's investigation, and afforded a regular "botanical debauch," as Mr. Grant Duff expresses it in his agreeable "Notes on an Indian Journey." Here were growing together a vast collection of tropical plants brought from all corners of the island, but the chief places were given to those whose products were useful to humanity. Amongst them the cinnamon held a conspicuous

rank. This bush grows all over Ceylon, and especially along the seashore where there is sufficient moisture. Here it was thriving vigorously in a white quartz soil. Close by was a cluster of the graceful cardamom plant, which is already affording profitable employment to planters in the jungles. There were cotton bushes, which grow the cotton of commerce, and towering cotton trees, in which the kites seem particularly fond of building their nests. The seed-vessels of this tree contain a silky white fibre not yet utilized in the market. A little further on rose a jungle of wild-looking sugar-canes, with long rough leaves, and then a patch of tobacco plants in full bloom, receiving great attention from numerous black and red butterflies. As for the different varieties of trees, it would take up several pages merely to enumerate them. There were bread-fruits and jack-fruits, calamanders, ebony, satin, rose, sappan, iron, jack, and innumerable others, but the most useful of all is the omnipresent palm. The variety of articles taken from this tree is surprising, and the authorities are fully justified in putting a figure of it on the coinage as the emblem of the island. From the cut flower-

stalk is drawn arrack and toddy, which when fermented become highly intoxicating beverages. From the toddy a coarse but useful sugar, of which horses and cattle are passionately fond, called jaghery, is extracted. The young shoots are made into pickles with vinegar brewed from the toddy. Then everybody has heard of coir fibre, and probably met with it in some form or other. It is nothing but the fibrous outside husk of the cocoa-nut, but it makes the most pliant and useful ropes, which are never rotted by salt water, and which are largely used for fishing-nets all over the world, as they never kink or get hopelessly knotted. The fibre is also made up into matting, in which form it is very common in English houses, and into brooms, brushes, with a score of other useful articles. There were several species of palms growing together here, but the most common was the cocoa-nut, after which comes the fan palm, and then the date palm, with several varieties of lower growing species. Everybody appears to admire palms very much, but it seems to me they are over praised. It is all very well to talk about their gracefulness, but they give little shade in a land where shade is a price-

less luxury. Truly they are very useful commercially, but they do not come within a very long way of an old English oak or chestnut for beauty.

The sun now getting high still found me enjoying the wilderness of flowers and shrubs in these gardens, but after a time the heat became so very powerful that it was necessary to beat a retreat and make for the hotel. When the sun comes well above the treetops, even the birds have to submit to his influence, and for the most part hide themselves away in thick plantations or shady bushes during the hotter hours of the day; so if the naturalist wishes to study the various species, he must be up early, like the birds themselves. Although this is one of the wet months at Colombo, it is too hot to do anything but read and write indoors from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. What the place must be like in the "hot season" I do not know!

CHAPTER V.

A RUN TO KANDY.

On the following morning I was awakened by W——, who occupied the next room to mine, and putting his head and shoulders over the partition which divided the rooms, he said he had received orders last night from the Colombo agents of his company to proceed forthwith to the scene of his future labours, somewhere about forty miles to the north-west of Kandy, in the centre of the island, and was going to start by the first train. If I wanted to see the ancient capital of the island, now was my chance. After a moment's consideration his proposition was accepted, and a few minutes afterwards we were both seated in the dewan-khana, hard at work on coffee and eggs—very little ones these, by the way, four or five only making

up the substance of one English egg—and then, getting through our chota hazri, we started off for the railway station. When we reached the summit of a little eminence, from which a good view of the town and harbour was to be obtained, we both turned at once to take a last look at the *Almora*, but we looked in vain. There lay the green-and-white Dutchmen, and the Government frigate, and a score of other ships, but our vessel's berth was empty, and nothing left visible of her save a faint line of smoke on the southern horizon. We both felt that our last tie with England was gone, and, after watching the receding smoke for a few minutes, set off at a great pace for the station again. We took second-class tickets to Kandy, and got into what was labelled a second-class compartment, but in point of comfort it might have been a fourth or fifth class. It was open right through, with the hardest of hard wooden seats. We made a start about half-past seven, and at first the line ran through deep groves of palm trees and scattered native huts, in front of the doors of which there were always a collection of little brown children, dogs, and chickens, all living on terms of perfect equality, and

apparently both very happy and very dirty. Beyond the palm groves, which only fringe the seacoast, the country became more open, and I saw rice growing again for the first time since I was a very small chokra and was out in India—about the time of the Mutiny.

The rice is called paddy by the natives, and the English, adopting the word, call the places in which it is grown paddy swamps; and they are real swamps. There are no hedges such as make the country so diverse and interesting in England, but each field is separated from the adjoining field by a high mud bank, broad at the base and two or three feet wide at the top, which is from four to six feet above the level of the surrounding land. When the young rice is planted, the water is turned into the enclosure from some neighbouring stream or canal, and ploughed backwards and forwards by native ploughs drawn by white bullocks. The result is a fearful "Slough of Despond," the whole field becoming one sea of liquid mud, but that is the condition which the rice likes best. As we passed over the level country in the train, the young plants were just shooting above the soil in armies of tender green blades, and the recent

rains having freshened things up a great deal, there seemed every prospect of a good harvest and an end of the famine. In some fields the rice had been sown earlier, and was a foot or more high, and here the paddy-birds—a very graceful species of white heron—seemed to be enjoying themselves along with two varieties of plovers.

There happened to be a gentleman in the carriage with us—a Scotchman, as I afterwards learned, and a superintendent of the railway—who speedily found out, from overhearing my talk with W——, that we were new-comers, and volunteered a great deal of useful information on sporting and general subjects. He said there are at times plenty of snipe on these paddy-fields, and very good bags could occasionally be made; but there were drawbacks to the shooting—among which the chief are the swarms of leeches which infest all damp ground, and defy gaiters or any other means of keeping them off; and secondly, the mosquitoes and flies, which are very troublesome at times. English dogs soon become knocked over by the combined attacks of these pests, and the best way of putting the birds up is to make two coolies

trail a long rope along the growing rice, while the sportsman walks on the high banks.

Ducks are numerous in the inland lagoons and in the jungles and open grassy spots. Jungle fowl and hares are to be found, which afford moderate sport; but our new friend K—— said, "I have shot and hunted on every possible occasion since I have been here. I have shot nearly everything, from elephants down to quail, but I never met with anything nearly as enjoyable as a day's rabbit shooting in an English wood or a warm corner on the 1st of October." As for such sport as the Prince of Wales had when he was out here, he said it was not for ordinary mortals. The game for all those big drives had been privately collected six months beforehand, and the Government shikarees had numbered every herd and known where every beast was before the Prince set foot in Ceylon. Elephants are getting very scarce in the island, and it is necessary to take out a licence to shoot them—an excellent precaution, though somewhat distasteful to the ardent British sportsman. I fear the days of elephants on the face of this earth are numbered. Being great beasts and needing wide

and ample pastures, they are yearly driven back before civilization, and it is astonishing how soon a large tract of country will be cleared of them by shooting and trapping. Doubtless, vast herds still exist in Central Africa, but the ivory hunters are working fearful havoc amongst them; and when the last wild elephant has been killed or caught, the race will be practically extinct, for they never breed in captivity. A single firm of London merchants use the ivory of the tusks of seven hundred elephants every year for the backs of brushes and various trivial articles; and if this be the annual stock of a single house, the consumption of the world must be enormous, so probably the number of elephants is decreasing rapidly everywhere.

After some fifteen or twenty miles of monotonous paddy swamps and scattered palm groves, we approached the foot of the great inland mountains, and began to mount rapidly, the scenery and surroundings changing with every mile of our way, until we had left the lowlands and palm trees far below, and were climbing up amongst mountain valleys and gullies clad with thick forests of jack, fig, and many other trees. Every now and then we crossed a foaming

mountain torrent by a light iron bridge, probably forged in Birmingham and brought out here piece by piece, or we rattled through dark tunnels pierced through the hearts of mountains too rough or too steep to be climbed.

We stopped at many stations, all of them very neatly kept, with clean white-looking offices and sheds, carefully cindered platforms, and generally a wonderful variety of flowers and shrubs, rewarding the attentions of the station coolies by luxuriant displays of foliage and blossoms. The name of every station was written up in black on a great white signboard, in three or four languages, so as to be intelligible to the various races of her Britannic Majesty's subjects. First came the familiar English characters, and then a modified form of the classical Sanscrit, and then the twisting and twining Canarese letters, every one of which looks like a worm in convulsions. But, despite all these various ways of writing the name of the same place, the coolies, who filled several third-class compartments in another part of the train, did not seem to be much benefited. Probably most of them did not know a dot or letter of any of the five hundred languages of

the world. At any rate, they grew very excited whenever we stopped at a station, and after a great deal of struggling and talking they usually ended by getting out with all their bundles and chattels, and wandering helplessly backwards and forwards until they were unceremoniously driven back to the train by the guards and porters, who appeared in some mysterious manner to know exactly where each coolie wanted to go.

At every stoppage there were men and women with plantains and cocoa-nuts to sell. The plantains were very good, and the price of a large bunch was only about a half-penny. In Covent Garden Market you would have to give four or five shillings for the same quantity, and then they would be nothing compared to these fresh-gathered fruits. The cocoa-nuts offered for sale were all unripe; there seemed to be no demand for the ripe fruit, which I believe is only used for flavouring curries, etc., in this country. The unripe cocoa-nut, from which the coarse outside husk had been peeled, was of a pale greenish colour and no harder than pulp. When a coolie bought one of these, the cocoa-nut man struck the top off with a blow from

a small bill-hook he carried in his girdle for the purpose, and the coolie drank the milky contents up with every sign of satisfaction, though K—— persuaded us not to try any, as he said it was fearfully dangerous stuff at this time of the year.

The stationmasters on this, as on nearly all Indian lines of railway, are either Europeans or Eurasians, and the engine-drivers are all Englishmen, who are found to be much more trustworthy and cool-headed, should danger arise, than the natives. The engine-drivers are remarkably well-to-do, much better off than many hundreds of "gentlemen clerks" in London offices. On this line they only conduct two trains a day, one up and one down, which leaves them a good margin of time for their own disposal. I do not know what their pay is exactly, but it is very considerable, and they get besides the value of all the fuel saved each journey from a liberal allowance made for the working of the engine. Then they have an excellent bungalow at either end of the line, where they can live or sleep, and altogether their berth seems a very comfortable one.

As I had been making some inquiries about

"Sensation Rock," which we were then approaching, K—— asked if I would like to pass over it on the engine, as the Prince of Wales had done. I gladly accepted the offer, and at the next station we two mounted up on the engine, and started off for the far-famed rock. Probably many million people travel in trains for every one that has ever ridden on an engine. It is a most peculiar sensation. In a carriage you are held steady by the other carriages, fore and aft, but in the front of the train it is not so. The great iron horse is harnessed by nothing except the rear couplings, and leaps and bounds along, when going rapidly, in a way that is rather startling at first. For a time I had to hold on to the railing until I got what we should call afloat my sea-legs. It was most exciting, and many times better than rolling along in a stuffy carriage. As for fresh air, we flew along so rapidly, it was as much as one could do to breath at all outside the shelter of the engine-shield.

While investigating the works of the engine, I noticed some red patches on the front of the boiler and about the wheels, and asked K—— what they came from. He said it was an un-

pleasant story. A day or two before, he was going down the ghaut on a pilot engine, *i.e.* an engine alone, without any carriages attached; and being desirous of getting to the coast quickly, they were running full speed, when, on turning a sharp corner round a rocky bend, they saw an old coolie watchman walking along the line ahead of them, with his back to the engine. The poor old fellow was as deaf as possible, and went meandering along between the rails, chewing betel-nut, and occasionally stopping to test the sleepers. They could not make him hear, although they put on the whistle full blast, and the great speed at which they were going down the incline made it impossible to stop, so that in less than half a minute after first seeing him, they struck the poor old fellow, and when they looked back all that remained were the fragments of his mangled body on the line, and some patches of blood and shreds of calico on the front of the engine.

K—— said sometimes he had to pull up half a dozen times in as many miles on account of natives or buffaloes being on the line. There is no end to the sleepy carelessness of the former; and as for the latter, they have generally to be

tilted off the line with the iron "cow-catchers" which are attached to the front of all these engines. From the lockers of the tender, where I and K—— established ourselves, there was twice as much to be seen as from the inside of a carriage, and we had the special advantage of knowing what we were coming to, which is not the case in ordinary travelling. At one point we saw a fine cobra asleep between the rails, and thought we should have run over him; but he felt the vibration of the coming danger, and crawled into the ditch on one side in time. However, we caught him up there, and had a good look at the snake as he turned to hiss defiance at us. K—— said he once saw a man bitten by one of these reptiles in the leg, and he died in three hours, in spite of all that could be done for him. There is no certain cure for the bite yet discovered, but perhaps the best remedy is ammonia poured into the wound, either pure, if the spirit is weak, or diluted with equal parts of water if strong. Sucking the puncture, and tying a ligature tight round the limb above it, is often useful, and helps to stop the spread of the poison.

Occasionally we passed the picturesque little

bamboo hut of a line-watchman under the shelter of a spreading fig tree, and the man would come out and make a low salaam when he saw there were "burra sahibs" on the engine. At other times we rattled through long tunnels where the engine fires and the sparks from the funnel lit up the jagged granite roof above us, and looking back we saw the long string of carriages in our wake following and turning when we turned like a huge subterranean snake. Then again we were rushing through some deep cutting where the bushes and creepers nearly met overhead, leaving only one narrow streak of blue of all the sky, and rare and curious ferns of all shapes and sizes grew on the deep soil on either bank, while lizards and many different species of butterflies revelled in the flowers and dense undergrowth.

"Sensation Rock" is certainly a triumphant piece of engineering, and makes one giddy even from the safe point of view of the window of a railway carriage, but it is much more interesting from the platform of the engine. For some way the line has been running along the forest-clad side of a mountain, but eventually

comes to a place where the sloping flanks are merged into the perpendicular face of a towering cliff. Along this the line is laid for a distance of a hundred yards or so on a sort of half bridge and half embankment. "Now," said K——, as we approached the precipice at thirty miles an hour, "if we go off the rails, it will be 'a long good-night' to all of us, with no chance of escape;" and the next minute we were flying along the narrow causeway, with two hundred feet of towering precipice above us, and below nothing but sheer crag and air for something like a thousand feet. Leaning over the engine rail, we gazed far down into the valley below, where the green and brown paddy-fields were like the squares on a chess-board and the men and oxen ploughing no bigger than the smallest dots, while here and there in the centre of dark green patches of palms and bananas were little Indian villages looking like brown smudges on the wide plain. Beyond, the hills rose ridge above ridge up to the sky, with dense forests and bright tracts of grass-land on their sides, and far away to the westward a streak of deeper blue showed the position of the sea.

At something like a thousand feet above the level of the plains we had an uninterrupted view of twenty miles to the southward over as rich a tract of forest-land as any in the world. What a museum of wonders there must have been hidden in that expanse, botanical, animal, and mineral! The wonderful armies of sylvan trees especially impressed me, clothing the hillsides with a covering that seemed as fine and close-fitting as velvet, and yet was made up of tens of thousand of forest giants, each an interesting study in itself. I always admired trees, and for a great forest I feel as much reverence as I do for a library.

But I was not half satisfied with gazing over the wide vista of mountain and plain, when it was abruptly hidden from us by the line entering another cutting, and "Sensation Rock" was nothing more than a memory. Even from below, probably, the cliff is a striking object, and it must open the eyes of the ignorant coolies ploughing in their ancestral paddy swamps to look above and see far overhead, right up in the home of the kites and eagles, the iron horse of the "Feringees" toiling and panting along the face of the precipice where

a few years ago not even the mountain sheep could have found a foot hold!

A few miles further on we passed a tall stone pillar on the right-hand side, which K—— pointed out as marking the highest point of the railway, and then the freer running of the engine soon told us we were again on level ground. From here the scenery was less rugged and grand, as we had gained the top of the tableland, and were merely passing over an elevated plateau, differing from the low swamps of the seacoast in the drier soil and the different vegetation. The bamboos were still numerous—in fact, they grow at an elevation of 2500 feet, and our present altitude was not 1200—but they were not so prominent or luxuriant as below, and the rice crops had quite given place to various cereals. Here for the first time I saw coffee growing in its native soil. It had, however, obviously been suffering badly from leaf disease, and the bushes were mere skeletons of their former selves, with meagre collections of limp yellow and green leaves and a few bunches of half-dried berries.

This leaf disease is becoming a serious affair

in Ceylon, where it has firmly established itself, and is depreciating the value of a great many estates. It seems to be caused by a minute white fungus, which strikes its roots into the substance of the leaf from the under side and throws out numerous fine white thread-like fibres, which travel along the surface of the epidermis until they come to the pores of which the skin of every leaf is full, and here they send down a root and establish a fresh centre, wherefrom other fibres start out, until the whole under surface of the leaf is covered. What is the immediate cause of the mischief does not seem to be yet certainly known, some planters maintaining that it arises from exhaustion of the soil, others from wet seasons, bad aspects of the plantation, too much manure, and many other causes. The only thing about which all are agreed is that it is very harmful to the trees and greatly depreciates the value of the crop.

Just before reaching the terminus, W—— left me, to find his way up country, bound something like fifty miles away, and without knowing a word of the language.

Our journey was finished about mid-day,

when the train drew up in the large and clean station of Kandy, where myself and hand-bag were immediately besieged by a salaaming crowd of Tamils and Canarese, who seemed as pleased to see me as if they had been waiting and longing for this moment all the last six months. Entrusting my bag to a small boy who looked thin and in want of backshish, I told him to lead the way to the Queen's Hotel, and followed him up a long dusty road under clumps of tulip trees and deep-shadowed figs, until we reached a long low white building at the corner of the two main thoroughfares of the town, which is dignified with the name of hotel. Here my belongings were deposited, and after a poor tiffin, the very worst cooked and served meal I had eaten since leaving England, I went for a stroll down the town, and of course directed my steps first of all to the far-famed temple of the "Light of Asia," Prince Buddha. This prince was born in 620 B.C., on the borders of Nepaul, and died at Kusinagara in Oudh in 543 or thereabouts. The story of his wonderful teaching and life has lately become better known—thanks, I may venture to say, to my father's epic poem of

the "Great Renunciation"—and now at this moment, as he has said, four hundred and seventy millions of the human race live and die in the faith which Gautama taught. "Forests of flowers are daily laid upon his stainless shrines, and countless millions of lips daily repeat the formula, 'I take refuge in Buddha.'" Although his followers are scattered over India, China, Japan, Thibet, Central Asia, Siberia, and even in Swedish Lapland, yet Ceylon, Siam, and Burmah are now the head-quarters of the religion; and of all the Buddhist temples, perhaps this one up here at Kandy is the most famous, for in it is carefully preserved the most sacred of relics—nothing less than one of Buddha's own teeth. This dubious relic of a dead philosopher has had some curious adventures. It was once seized upon by a native conqueror and carried away into India, but the faithful priests of the temple followed it through all its wanderings, until, to be rid of them, the king swore he would have it ground to powder. The story says, the woeful priests spent the night in prayer, and when the morning came, went all-sorrowful to see the last of the sacred tooth; but it had mysteriously disappeared, and

some time afterwards, when they returned to their temple, there was the tooth in its old place, from which the irreverent conqueror had so ruthlessly removed it. Unfortunately I did not get a view of this wonderful object, the mere sight of which performs miracles on true believers; but not being a true believer myself, and being shy of trespassing in strange places, besides being doubtful if I ought to take my hat off or my shoes, or both, I contented myself with examining the outside of the temple.

From the exterior it is rather like a Chinese pagoda, but has no very distinct form, on account of being surrounded with other buildings—priests' houses probably—and balconies with far-reaching eaves. I made my way up into one of these verandahs, and spent a long time admiring the extraordinary frescoes with which the walls were adorned. One would not think Buddhism was a very mild or gentle religion, if all one knew of it were gathered from these pictures, which are calculated to give a timid person bad dreams for a fortnight. They seemed to illustrate the various doings or misdoings of the demons who make it their special duty to torture poor sinners in the

"lower regions." The men were all bright red in colour, and the demons sooty black. In the first fresco two devils were sitting on the chest of a somewhat stout gentleman, and tearing out his tongue with a large pair of red-hot pincers. Next came more imps, roasting another gentleman over a lively fire, the great white blisters on his skin and his uneasy expression being admirably given. Further on, there were more of the same kind, illustrating how some of us are to have our skin peeled off, or our eyes hooked out with sharp nails, some day; and the region depicted was so horrible, I felt sincerely sorry, even for the little devils who had to live in it. I also penetrated a short way into the interior of the temple, which was only dimly lighted by a few palm-oil lamps. What was to be seen, however, was very rich and impressive in the mellow light, and at one end there was a sort of shrine, partly hidden by hanging curtains, and lit up inside by numerous small lamps. This was doubtless the abode of Buddha's tooth; and while I was standing admiring the surroundings, two priests in flowing yellow garments, with bare feet and closely shaven heads, came up to me and threw some

handfuls of white flowers over me—a proceeding which I did not understand; and fearful that they would think I had come to be christened, or married, or something of the sort, I beat a retreat.

These priests do not worship fire like the Parsees, or even respect it like as the Brahmans do, and they rarely kindle one for fear of destroying animal life; even the life of a grub in the wood or a beetle under the ground being sacred to them. They obtain their food by charity, for which purpose they rise early every morning, and as soon as it is light enough to distinguish the lines of the veins on their hands they wrap their graceful yellow toga round them, and, taking their alms-bowls in hand, make their way to the village or town. They may not solicit charity or alms, but coming to a house, they stand silently in front of the door for a few moments. If the inhabitants are charitably disposed, they receive their dole without thanks; and if no one gives to them, they pass on in silence to the next house. This is the pleasantest and most picturesque way of begging I have read of; and it must be much easier to drive a whining rascal from one's doorway

than a dignified beggar who says nothing, but by his silence leaves you to the promptings of your generosity. It is considered most orthodox for them to live alone in huts, under the shadow of a spreading forest tree; but in general they reside in convents or colleges, under the leadership of an abbot, some old and reverend priest "for wisdom far renowned." Altogether they seem to spend a placid, useful life, exercising hospitality to strangers, which their religion enjoins, and giving gratuitous instruction to youth, which is also regarded as meritorious.

From the gaily painted temple of Buddha my wandering steps led me to a well-built and substantial English church, only a hundred yards away from the heathen pagoda. The size of this church and the number of pews showed the English residents up here to be numerous, and with the officers of the two or three British regiments quartered in the barracks close by they must form a pleasant little society.

The native streets of Kandy are very Oriental in appearance, and much brighter in colour and gayer than Colombo, where there is a great proportion of Government clerks and mercantile

employés among the population, who affect European dress, or, if they wear their native costume, which becomes them much better, they confine themselves to white and black. Here in the principal streets there was a dense but ever-moving crowd and a tossing sea of coloured turbans, amongst which blue, red, yellow, and green were conspicuous, while the flowing yellow and saffron robes of Buddha's priests, the showy white of the Government "writers," and the many varied sarees of the women filled up the main stream, and made as bright an everyday picture as could well be seen anywhere. Meandering down the streets and enjoying the novelty of everything, I spent the greater part of the afternoon in exploration. The crowd, though thick, was very orderly, and but for the children and dogs who were perpetually getting in one's way, there was no more scrimmaging or jostling than on a summer's afternoon in Hyde Park. To the English especially, either from reverence or fear, the natives were very deferential. For instance, I stopped to make a purchase at the counter of a worker in sandalwood, around which a group of well-to-do natives were

talking and bargaining, and when I approached they at once discontinued talking and stepped aside. In the same way, when walking through the crowd in the thickest part of the bazaar, I always had plenty of elbow-room, and was not jostled once, the various groups dividing courteously to let me pass. At one place there were some little children sprawling all over the road directly in my path. They were so engaged making little mounds of dust and sticking feathers in them that they did not notice my approach; but just as I got up to them, a little girl of twelve or thirteen, in a sky-blue saree—clearly their guardian for the time—sprung up, and rushing to the group, said in a whisper, which I overheard, "Look! an Englishman!" while she seized one little brown imp, whose attire consisted of a piece of string and two glass bangles, by the top-knot, and dragged him out of my path with as much precipitation as though I had been an elephant.

I passed one elephant, a real giant, a great lumbering beast, towering high above the one-storied shops on either side of the street, but in spite of his vast size, which nearly blocked the whole road, stepping as softly and carefully along

amongst the toes of the crowd as a young kid. A little further on two English officers came riding along, lifted high above the heads of the many-coloured throngs on their tall white chargers, and looking delightfully neat and cool in their becoming white-and-gold uniform. So rode the Roman legionaries amongst the wild Britons in England some sixteen or seventeen hundred years ago; and who shall say what changes such another period may bring about in the nations of the world? The Fijian may sketch the bittern-haunted ruins of Westminster Abbey, and moralize on the departed grandeur of the once great British nation, and the whole world may be ruled by new races.

There being no visitors at the Queen's Hotel, it was remarkably dull in the evening, and I had to amuse myself as best I might with an ancient newspaper. So, after a couple of cheroots smoked in the verandah, where the air was soft and cool after a shower which had fallen in the afternoon, I determined to "turn in," and get back to Colombo as early the next morning as possible.

On the following morning, immediately after

chota hazri, I "made tracks" for the station, and succeeded in catching the first down train for Colombo, to which place the run was uneventful, and by mid-day I was back in the Fort Hotel again.

It rained heavily during the afternoon, but the hotel being very dull now that the *Almora* and all her pleasant passengers had left, I took a walk round by the fort and along the beach, which lines the peninsula on which it is built. There were vast numbers of crows all along the edge of the water, hopping and flapping about, or quarrelling over the bits of garbage thrown up by the surface. They are not particularly clean feeders—quantity rather than quality seems to be what they are set upon. They eat anything, vegetable or animal, and must really do a great deal of good as scavengers—carrion being better when fledged with black feathers than when lying open and ugly on the beach. It is curious how clean the birds keep themselves, in spite of their very objectionable tastes. Like the Syrian doves, which grovel all day in the odoriferous dust-heaps of the villages, and yet, when sunset comes, rise into the air and take their way homewards as bright and spot-

less as though they had done nothing but trim their feathers since morning, so these crows, no matter what they may have been feeding upon, are always glossy and neat. Their black feathers shine in the sunlight with almost as many tints of green and purple as a pigeon's neck, and their keen dark eyes are full of mischief and cunning. It must be to the forementioned changing lights of the plumage of their neck that they owe their scientific name of *Corvus splendens*; they are certainly not splendid in any other respect. And yet, though they are abandoned wretches, given to all manner of wickedness, one cannot help liking them, they are so utterly indifferent to one's opinion of their proceedings; if they would only be a little less noisy, they might become great favourites.

The beach was strewed with a variety of shells thrown up by the late storms, most of which, however, had been damaged against the rocks and boulders; but there were some new and curious specimens; amongst others three or four sorts of cowries, one of which was the money cowrie, used by the natives as small change. Very small change they are, as

5120 only equal the value of a rupee or two shillings.

In the course of the afternoon I presented some letters of introduction, which resulted in several invitations to lunch and dinner; but there matters ended. Letters of introduction nowadays are much less useful than they were some years ago. Of course, they give one a start in the society of a place at any time, but formerly the bearer of a letter was invariably put up in the bungalow, and feasted and made one of the family to which he introduced himself. Now, however, so many more English come and go between India and the home country, that it would be too great a strain on the hospitality of most houses to entertain every stranger, and so the usual result of an ordinary letter of introduction is an invitation to tiffin or dinner, which costs the invited several rupees in carriage money, and that is all. Afterwards he must work his own way into people's good graces like any other stranger. However, it is as well to bring out any introductions that can be got, especially in the case of "griffins," who come without any fixed ideas of what they are going to do.

The next morning, the 20th of September, I walked over the racecourse with M——, of the O. C. Bank, to see the club house, with which I was agreeably surprised. It is a very fair building for the town, and is well patronized. There had been a ball the night before, and consequently the place was in a great mess—heaps of empty soda-water and wine bottles in the courtyard showing what hot work dancing had been. In the dining-room the crows were having a grand feast amongst the lobster-claws and chicken-bones under the table, while the squirrels were sitting on the beams overhead, and holding a hot argument about the extraordinary goings on of the strange beings below the previous night. Lastly, upstairs in the great dancing-saloon disorder reigned supreme, and the floor was littered with relics of the bygone gaiety. I picked up a programme of some much-dancing young lady, who had close on thirty names down for the evening's work. Close by was a crimson rosebud left on a chair, which I carried off, though doubtless it was not meant for me, and one might have made quite a collection of beads and tags of lace and ribbons, had one chosen.

The club house stands by itself, overlooking a fine grassy maidân, which is called the race-course, and which is very well suited for one save for the tiresome little land-crabs, who have pitted it far and near with their burrows, thus making the ground excessively dangerous for galloping. These mischievous crustacea come up from the sea close by and dig themselves homes in the soft soil, bringing out the sand in real armfuls, and, with a spring in the air, scattering it in a wide circle away from them. So continuous are their exertions, that though a staff of labourers is constantly at work filling up the holes, the war still goes on, and what the crabs dig in a night it takes the coolies all day to replace. These crabs, like Cæsar's ancient Britons, are equally ready to fight or fly. They possess wonderful swiftness of foot, and can run faster than a man can walk, so that it is not at all easy to cut them off from their burrows; but if they are circumvented, they at once throw themselves into a fighting position, and inflict severe injury on any one who seizes them rashly.

During the rest of my stay in Colombo I made numerous expeditions in every direction,

and saw everything there was to be seen of interest, but nothing which can well be chronicled here. I was especially interested in the Portuguese quarter of the town, where the houses are (like the people who dwell in them) half native and half European. Some of the inhabitants are pure-blooded Portuguese, the remnants of the former owners of the island, but the majority have Indian blood in their veins, and associate more with their Asiatic relations than their European kinsmen. Their houses are better built than those of the Cingalese, and differ from them chiefly in having verandahs with blinds and steps leading up to the doorways. The people themselves are a good-looking set, the women especially, having fair olive-coloured complexions, good eyes, and graceful carriage. They are not, unfortunately, particularly clean, the small children being much dirtier than native children. The chief street in this quarter is very steep, and goes by the fearful name of Dam Street, which title is posted up on a very conspicuous board at the top of the hill. Certainly, as one toils up the slope, with a blazing sun overhead and a glaring white

road underfoot, one does get rather tired and ruffled, and perhaps it is a comfort to some people to have the feelings they scarcely like to utter exhibited in black and white when the summit is reached, and they pause to gain breath and mop up the perspiration.

I also made an expedition to the Colpetty Coffee Mills, of which a fellow-passenger on the *Almora* is superintendent. They are very extensive, and in the season do a large business in pulping, cleaning, and exporting the coffee which comes down from the inland estates. Unfortunately the machinery was not at work during my visit, so I had to content myself with going over the buildings and witnessing some packing and sorting. The drying yards, where the coffee berries are exposed to the sunlight to be dried before being packed, are carefully asphalted nearly to the smoothness of a first-class rink, and they are indeed sometimes used for lawn-tennis parties when there is no work going on. I regretted not being able to witness the various processes of pulping and drying, but was much interested in all there was to be seen.

CHAPTER VI.

UP THE COAST.

After waiting more than a week at Colombo, and making daily pilgrimages to the British India Office to enquire "when on earth" the next steamer was coming (she was much overdue), she suddenly put in an appearance at the harbour mouth, and I forthwith packed up my shore-going kit, paid my bills, and went down to the custom-house docks to get my luggage out. Unfortunately it was Sunday, and the docks were closed and locked, myself outside, my property inside, and the *Africa* finishing her coaling operations and looking very much like starting. The native superintendent said the case was hopeless, as nothing could be done on Sunday without the permission of the Governor of the island himself, and added that I should have to stay another week in Colombo.

Not liking this idea, I forthwith went in search of the superintendent of the place, whom I unearthed after a lot of trouble, and fortunately found in a happy frame of mind. Representing to him how things stood, and saying that if the boxes were not obtained I would embitter the existence of every official in the place for the next seven days, I got the chief to permit his assistant to permit some one else to permit the keywallah to unlock the stores, and make his coolies convey my thirteen trunks down to the beach, whence they were taken on board a cargo-boat, myself supervising—for if you want a thing done sharply in India you must see to it in person. Finally, about mid-day, I was once more afloat on "the sea—the fresh, the green, the ever free," following the cargo-boat in a light outrigger paddled by two sinewy natives.

The *Africa*, although a fine steamer, was not so smart and trim as the *Almora*, chiefly because she was merely a trading ship, and had been hard at work for the last few months carrying rice to all the ports of the Malabar and Coromandel coasts for the famine-stricken natives inland. She had, however, a good saloon, with any number of cabins and berths, of which I

took my choice as there was only one passenger, besides myself, and he invariably slept on deck; in fact, I followed his example after one night spent below, when I was driven wild with cockroaches and stifled by the heat.

We spent the whole of the blazing hot day taking in cargo, principally jute and rice; and the noise of the donkey engine, the dense volumes of smoke, and the close, sickly smell of the open holds, where hundreds of tons of rice were piled up as tight as it could be packed, made me long for the evening and the serang's shrill whistle for the crew to get up the anchor.

But though it was uncomfortable on deck, there were some "men and brothers" alongside infinitely more uncomfortable. These were a couple of hundred coolies going back to their homes in Madura and Malabar after a year's work on the Ceylon plantations. They came off from the shore—men, women, and children, with all their small belongings, bundles and parcels of every shape and size—piled up in two cargo-boats, so tightly packed and squeezed together that it seemed impossible a baby could have been added to the load without turning some one out. Alas for them! there was a

strong ground swell rolling into the harbour, which heaved the cargo-boats up and down, although the *Africa* sate as steady as a rock; and the result was that even before they reached her the coolies were abjectly sick, and they do not bear up well against adverse circumstances, so their sufferings were almost comical. They had left the shore sitting or standing in the boat as happy and trim as coolies ever can be, but when they got under our bows all were lying down at the bottom in one indistinguishable conglomerate of legs and arms. The poor creatures looked more like a kettle of eels than anything else, and the rowers sitting on the seats above them only laughed at their miseries. Their sufferings, however, were only just beginning, for there was so much cargo and stealable property about on deck, that the first officer would not permit them to enter the ship until things had been got into better order on board. So there the miserable people lay, rolling and tossing about on the long heavy ground swell, with a burning sun overhead, roasting them and adding to their miseries, while only a few feet away lay the great long ship as steady as dry ground,

and doubtless a sort of heaven to their eyes. For three long hours they rolled about in the miseries of sea-sickness, from which they seemed to suffer as much as though they were Christians, until at length their sufferings were so intense I took pity on them. I went to the captain and asked him to be good enough to have them up as soon as might be, and he at once gave the necessary orders for the ship's ladder to be let down over the side, and the coolies at once proceeded to come on board. But this was not as easy as it might seem. At one moment the ground swell brought the rice-boats up to within a few feet of our bulwarks, and the next, sinking rapidly, took the boat right down to the level of the orlop deck. The first coolie who made the attempt seized hold of the ladder with one hand when the boat was high, and when it sank back again the next moment was left kicking in the air, holding on by one hand and waving a dirty brown bundle with the other. He would inevitably have dropped off and been drowned or crushed, had not the lascars or native sailors sprung down to his rescue, and, seizing him by the top-knot and shoulders, pitched him head-

long on deck, where he landed, sprawling like an octopus. Some of the men came up well, but the women and children were a great trouble, making fruitless attempts at the wrong time, and when a good opportunity occurred hanging back. Somehow or other they were at last all got on board. The worst cases were two Arab women done up in huge trousers and flowing robes, with yashmaks over their faces. They were so quiet and dignified amidst their sufferings that I felt for them under what, to them, must have been a fearful ordeal. Their dresses completely prevented them from doing anything in their own behalf, and they were very loth to be touched by the hands of unbelieving giaours; so there they stood on the edge of the rice-boat, until the lascars lost patience, and, seizing them by anything they could get hold off, hoisted them on deck by main force.

At sunset the crows, who had been perched in lines on the rigging all day, took their departure to the shore with the kites and a fleet of empty cargo-boats; and the stopping of the donkey engine left the vessel in peace while dinner was served in the saloon. It was

not a particularly brilliant meal; the captain at the head of the table, MacB—— on one hand, and I on the other made up the whole company, with a flock of white-robed "boys" behind our chairs doing nothing but stare and listen to the captain's stories, which were certainly very sensational. He told us how he was once running before a storm off the Australian coast in a large trading steamer, and, having been on deck for thirty-six hours, he had only just gone below and was sitting down eating a plate of soup, when there came a terrific crash and the whole vessel seemed to leap into the air. Rushing on deck, he was totally unable to see anything of their whereabouts on account of the darkness and driving spray, but what puzzled him most was that although the roar of the breaking waves was to be heard close at hand, none struck the ship, which remained as steady and free as though she were in a comfortable dry dock. They spent a night of uncomfortable suspense, and when the morning broke and the wind went down, they found to their amazement that they were high and dry on a rocky ridge, with a beautiful palm-covered island under their bows.

The vessel, flying before the wind and under full steam, had gone head-first on to the ridge. In some miraculous way she seems to have sprung upon receiving the shock, or to have been lifted by a more than usually large wave over the serrated coral ridge. There she sate as firmly fixed as an egg on a spike, and so she remained for six months, during which time the crew lived very contentedly on the island, which was small and uninhabited, until a Government frigate, meandering through these seas, found them and took them off, after which the steamer was stripped of all valuables that could be got out; and if the sea has not knocked her to pieces, any one who goes past the island may still see the curious sight of a large three-masted vessel firmly fixed on a coral rock, ten or twelve feet above high-water mark.

On another occasion the captain told us how he was cruising about in an American sailing vessel "somewhere in the Pacific," and having run short of wood and water, they bore up for a small island about half a mile in diameter, which they saw one evening on the horizon. This was an atoll, or coral island, enclosed by a complete circle of coral, rising about a quarter

of a mile from the shore of the island. If there had not been a bright moon, they would have gone right on to this ridge, which was just "awash," with seventeen fathoms of water a couple of hundred yards from it. Luckily they saw it in time, and stood off and on until the next morning, when, after circumnavigating the little place, they found one narrow entrance through the barrier, and warping the vessel carefully through, they were soon in the inner circle of water and made their ship fast. The island was a delightful little spot; so they stayed there a week, and every one, from the captain to the swabber, enjoyed themselves very much, catching wonderful fish in their land-locked harbour, and climbing for cocoa-nuts—the island, like all such places, being thickly covered with palms. But human joys are fleeting, and the pleasantest things must come to an end; so after the last cask was filled, and every bunker loaded to the top with palm logs, the captain reluctantly gave the order to "up anchor," and the crew waved a fond adieu to the scene of their enjoyments. But this is a strange world; no one can tell what the next moment will bring forth. It was one thing to get up

the anchor, but when that was done, and as much sail set as could be safely carried in such a circumscribed area, the puzzle was to reach the open sea, which spread in an unlimited expanse of blue just beyond the narrow wall of coral. They tacked to where the first officer was prepared to swear they had entered, but there was no opening there. The captain called him a land-lubber, and remembered that the gap into the open sea was a hundred yards further on; so they stood back again. But it was the captain's turn to look small, for there also was the impassive coral without the smallest sign of a break in it. Then the third officer came forward, saluted, and said he felt certain that during their stay the vessel had drifted round the island, and the channel would be found on the other side. So, there being nothing else to do, the captain listened to the third officer's advice—a very unusual thing—and the vessel was worked round to the back of the island; but every one's heart sank when no trace of an opening appeared. In fact, the one connection with the sea by which they had entered into this natural trap had been built up by the ever-busy coral insects while they were enjoy-

ing themselves ashore, and when they had completely sailed round the inside of the reef, they came to the melancholy conclusion that they were caged and entrapped beyond the hope of rescue. There they stayed for something like nine months, amusing themselves as best they could. But we are perverse beings. The island seemed a paradise to them when they thought it was about to be left behind, but when they were forced back and obliged to stay, matters looked quite different. At the end of that time they were overjoyed to make out a sail in the offing, which stood in to the island, and at noon they saw fluttering from her flag halliards the signal "What do you want?" to which they replied, "We want to go to Melbourne." "Why don't you go, then?" asked the stranger. "We can't," the prisoners responded. "Are you aground?" "No." "Is there mutiny on board?" "No." "Is your ship sound?" "Perfectly." "Then why on earth," said the outsider, losing patience, "don't you come out into the offing?" and it was not until the boats of the respective captains met on either side of the coral ridge, that the case was made clear to the new-comers, who were heart-

less enough to be much amused. Of course, the ship inside the lagoon could not be got free; so everything portable was taken out of her, and there she remains to this day, like the captain's other ship.

These and many other stories of a like nature amused us during dinner, or while we walked up and down smoking our cheroots after that somewhat solitary meal; but when the captain said good-night, we betook ourselves to our mattresses, and watched the bright stars overhead and shining globes of the jellyfish under water, until we sank into dreamland.

The next two or three days were remarkable for nothing but their tediousness. We first ran up to Tuticorin, in the Gulf of Manaar and close to Adam's Bridge—the ridge of sand and stones in many places just "awash," which connects Ceylon with India. This ridge is supposed by various signs to be rising slowly. Amongst others, a couple of Dutch ships, while being pursued by some Portuguese men-of-war, when Ceylon was in the possession of the latter, escaped by making a bold attempt to sail across the bar, in which they succeeded, while the Portugal ships, drawing more water, came to grief. As the Dutch

ships could not get across now, this certainly goes some way to prove that the bank is higher than it was, but if rising at all it rises very gradually. Some day it may, perhaps, be dry land right across from the mainland to the island, but either such a bridge or a clear passage cut through for shipping would tell very heavily against the prosperity of Colombo, which would be left outside the new lines of traffic, and perhaps share the damage of Suez and Alexandria after the making of the Suez Canal.

Of Tuticorin I did not see much, as we anchored some seven miles from the shore, owing to the shallowness of the water, and there was not time to row to land and return before nightfall. Immediately we let go our anchor we noted, with the help of our glasses, a fleet of flat-bottomed rice-boats putting off to us, and although, owing to the distance, we did not see them start, we were soon aware that the crows were coming too, and before we had well swung round to our anchor they arrived in a great flock, and took possession of the rigging and spars. Who shall say they are not enterprising and intelligent birds, when they make out a ship in the offing, and fly off seven miles to her

for the chance of picking up a mutton bone or the leg of a chicken?

The natives in the heavy rice-boats took a much longer time to reach us, it being a two-hours' pull against the tide; but they were a muscular lot, and did not seem at all distressed when they reached the sides of the *Africa*. After they had had a grand quarrel for places, during which we were the centre of a wild pandemonium of voices, and the donkey engine had set to work, the rest of the day was steam, uproar, and the smell of damp rice. These natives are mostly Roman Catholics, and wear on their brown chests little crucifixes and medals, the symbols of their religion, which they occasionally take up and kiss in a rather demonstrative fashion. Probably the reason why the natives become converts to Roman Catholicism more readily than to Protestantism is that the forms and ceremonies of the former appeal more to their Oriental imaginations than the simpler worship of Protestants, and perhaps also because the Catholic missionaries, who are numerous along this coast, obtain a greater hold over the natives by living amongst them and studying their habits and ways of life.

The dinner that evening was even more solitary than the last, since MacB—— had left us during the afternoon for Tuticorin, where he was to be famine correspondent to a London daily paper. So I and the captain dined in lonely state, and I had to listen to a score of wild tales about his adventures in various parts of the world. Amongst other things, we were talking of the sand ridge in the neighbourhood stretching across the gulf, and he said he believed it was entirely caused by the north-east and south-west monsoon, the former blowing for half the year and sweeping the sand in from the Bay of Bengal, and the latter driving the sand up the narrow channel from the Indian Ocean for the other six months. In this way the silt was banked up in a narrow ridge between the two seas, and the shallowness of the water off Tuticorin was due to the same cause. In fact, he thought both the Gulf of Manaar and Palk Strait were being slowly filled up with drifting deposit, the water being shallower off this harbour now than it was a few years ago, to his own knowledge. Our rice-loading operations being over by sunset, we steamed away to the southward during the course of the

evening, and to my great regret passed Cape Comorin about midnight, when, as it was very dark and raining heavily, we could see nothing of the coast line.

In the morning I woke up to find we were anchored off Trevandrum on the Travancore coast, and were besieged by the usual swarms of cargo-boats and lightly clad natives, who had surrounded us and were shouting and struggling for first place. There was not much to be seen of the shore, as the morning was misty and wet; at one moment the rain would come down in torrents and the sky be overcast and dull, and then, after a hard struggle, the sun would break through the clouds and light up the palm-fringed beach for a few minutes.

All that can be seen of Trevandrum from the sea is a white flagstaff towering above the palms, and one white house on top of a steep rock. This may have been all there was of Trevandrum, but as the name is printed large and thick in the maps, I am inclined to suspect there must have existed more of a town behind the palms inland. However, the rain came down in torrents shortly after daybreak and hid even this from my sight.

All day the donkey engines were at their monotonous work, hauling the fat rice-bags out of the close stuffy hold and lowering them over the side of the ship, which the steam wrapped in white vapour from stem to stern, and, together with the driving rain, made it utterly impossible to keep dry anywhere on deck. So, after putting on every available pair of boots at hand, and getting them and all my clothes soaked through and through, I gave up the attempt, going about barefooted like the officers for the rest of the voyage. There were no ladies to mind how we were got up, and simply for want of something to do, I assisted the officers at tallying cargo, and even tried my hand at running the engines. But it was damp and uncomfortable work at best.

For two more days we rolled up the coast through the fag-end of the south-west monsoon, amidst an uninterrupted downpour of pelting rain, which did not leave me with as much as a dry handkerchief in my wardrobe. We stopped twice or even three times a day at different little waterside ports to disgorge the precious white grain, for lack of which the famine-stricken coolies were dying by thousands inland; but

there was never anything to see on shore—nothing but a long flat coast, with an unbroken fringe of palms growing down to the water's edge, and the usual musterings of boatmen, kites, and crows.

Consequently I was glad when the morning of the 27th of September broke fine and sunny, and the captain pointed out to me, far ahead, a tiny white flagstaff towering above the palms, which he said was Cochin, the next port to Calicut, my destination. We had time to make a comfortable breakfast—a thing of the utmost importance if you desire to enjoy the rest of the day—and just as we had come up on deck and got our cheroots under way, the anchor went down, the chain rattled out, and we swung round in four fathoms of water about a mile and a half from the harbour mouth, which distance, although it seems very considerable to landsmen, is only a little way at sea, and appeared nothing to us on the *Africa*, after lying seven and eight miles off the land, as we had been doing hitherto.

This port is the capital of the native territory of Cochin, which stretches along the northern boundary of Travancore. The Raja is said to

be an enlightened and intelligent ruler, but his land is in an out-of-the-way place, so he and his affairs are rarely heard of—most people in England being very hazy as to where Cochin is, and what the extent of territory under the rule of the native prince. The town, I believe, is of considerable size, and possesses the advantage of a very fair harbour for small vessels, of which we saw about a score of masts peeping out among the palm trees. Here begins the curious natural backwater or long lagoon, which stretches away to the northward, and is only separated from the sea by a sandy bank a mile or so wide, on which grows a dense fringe of palms. In this place crocodiles are found, and afford the English residents considerable target practice, as they go down the backwater on picnics or hunting expeditions; but, not landing here, I saw nothing of them.

After a long stay off Cochin we steamed on again for the next halting-place, Calicut, which we might have reached in two hours, as it is only a short way further north, but, owing to a huge sandspit which juts from the land just beyond Cochin, we had to make a detour out to sea and then back again, which brought

us finally off Calicut beach early in the afternoon.

From the sea, like all other ports along this low monotonous coast, there is not much to be said for Calicut, as it consists of a line of open shanties on the beach, a white lighthouse, and the usual flagstaff, from which the Union Jack flutters gaily. The palm trees hide all the rest of the town, and fringe the coast northward and southward as far as the eye can reach. But inland the scene is enlivened by the misty blue outlines of what a Yankee would call "rising ground," and what is geographically known as the Western Ghauts—about the first hills I had seen since leaving Kandy. These hills form the western boundaries of the great coffee districts of Coorg and Mysore, perhaps the most productive in the world, and continue to fringe the coast in an almost unbroken line up to Bombay.

The boatmen, who soon came off from the shore, are slightly different in features and colour from those we had seen hitherto, but the most striking thing about them was their head covering, which is the most extraordinary structure ever seen on a human head. Imagine a huge

umbrella made of split bamboo and neatly covered with strips of fan-palm leaves; then remove the stick, and in its place substitute a cylinder, also of palm leaf, like an English silk hat minus the brim; and then place this edifice on the close-shaven head of a Tamil boatman, and you will understand their headgear, which serves the purpose of sun-hat or umbrella equally well, but is not adapted to carrying burdens in high winds. So broad are the hats, that when the first cargo-boat came off to us I saw nothing but the hull, twenty spoon-shaped paddles, and an undulating platform of things that looked at a distance like huge soup-plates turned upside down. In attire, or rather lack of it, these men were the same as their countrymen further down the coast, but the crosses and charms which hung on each brown chest in the neighbourhood of Tuticorin were not to be seen here, showing that the missionaries had not yet broached this part of the country, or had not been so successful.

I landed in the mail-boat by special favour of the postmaster-general of the district, a very pleasant Englishman, who gave me a complete and exhaustive account of the history of Calicut

from the most remote period up to the present date, and threw in a supplement to his discourse about the future of the town, while we were being rowed ashore sitting on a sack of letters about to be distributed in the neighbourhood.

He mentioned, I remember, that the word "calico" and "Calicut" are one and the same, the former being the older form, and the name of this town when it was a thriving and busy industrial centre and the chief manufactory of calico and cotton cloths. Since then it has gone down sadly in worldly prosperity, and is now nothing but a police station and the residence of some European coffee and mercantile agencies.

That the place was once of great importance is certain for many reasons; amongst others, there is a colony of pale-skinned Jews to the southward of the town, who are supposed to be the direct descendants of the Jews whom Solomon the Magnificent sent to the "gorgeous East" to collect ivory and peacocks for his palaces. That they came here and established themselves shows the place must have had a wide-spreading trade, and have been well known at that period to the wandering Arabs

and Persians, who were probably the earliest explorers that crossed any ocean in search of trade and commerce. It is a hundred pities there is no harbour to the town, as were there one it might soon become a flourishing seaport again; but, indeed, there is scarcely a harbour worthy of the name from Bombay in the north down to Colombo in the south, and when the monsoon blows in from the Arabian Sea the whole western coast of India becomes dangerous. Here especially, as there is not an atom of protection, the trading and passenger steamers have frequently to steam by with mails and passengers, and carry them on until they are able to get near the shore. Wrecks of native crafts are frequent here and at Cochin. They anchor near the shore during a lull in the monsoon, and perhaps while they are busy taking cargo a gale springs up; but being dull, heavy tubs, they cannot get into the offing quick enough, and drive on shore, all hands being generally lost, and the beach strewn for miles with their freights of cocoa-nuts or palm-oil casks. The strand, when we reached it, was a very animated scene: in the background long low lines of sheds for storing rice and merchan-

dise, and a towering hedge of palm trees rising behind them, with the tall white lighthouse overtopping even the palms; coolies were hurrying to and fro between the cargo-boats and storehouses, bending under the weight of great rice-sacks; half-caste writers in white European garments, with white helmets on their heads, were standing at the doors, entering each bag in their day-books; native women, some gaily dressed in white calicoes with green or red sarees, and some not dressed at all, were running about with loads on their heads nearly as heavy as those carried by the men; scores of naked brown children, revelling and rioting in unlimited dirt and sand, were fighting with dozens of mangy dogs for bones and scraps of melon-peel; while above the busy crowd the cawing crows occupied every coign of advantage, and the kites swept round and in and out among the masts and palm trees in easy circles, every now and then coming down like meteors, and flapping away triumphantly with part of a dead dog, a fish's head, or some such tempting morsel. Above all the Indian sun flared down on the Christians and pagans, the "just and the unjust," and gave the scene that brilliant contrast

of light and shadow which is seen nowhere except under a tropical sun.

After depositing my light effects with the agent of the British Indian Company, and sending off a special cargo-boat with a reis and twenty muscular rowers for my heavy baggage, which completely filled the cargo-boat and probably made the natives think the sahib had a remarkable supply of trousers and coats, I placed myself under the guidance of my friend of the mail-boat, and made my way to the English club house, where my name was entered as an honorary member, and under its hospitable roof I spent the rest of the day.

This club house is a very comfortable place, and much frequented by the English residents and stray planters, who come down from the hills, when fever-stricken, to see the doctor here, and imbibe the invigorating ozone of the sea-breezes. It boasts a capital reading-room, with a wide verandah, well stocked with the peculiar long-armed easy-chairs of the country, and opening directly on to the beach. Behind is a billiard-room, and across the courtyard there is a row of half a dozen comfortable bed-rooms under a low thatched roof, with the in-

evitable verandah and punkah ropes hanging by every door-post. Then one passes down a long passage under a shady grove of palm trees, where the ripe nuts hang in great clusters at the top of the tapering stems, until the feeding department is reached, where I "tiffined" with two or three other Englishmen, one of whom subsequently turned out to be bound for the same part of the jungles as myself.

With tiffin, a game of billiards, and reading the latest English newspapers, I managed to get through the hotter hours of the day, until the crows began to fly homewards, and the little brown beings who had been playing in the hot sand all day likewise "made tracks" for their mud huts, and there came a strong odour of burning cow-dung, the usual fuel here, and of boiling rice. Then, waking up and stretching myself, I called out for a "boy," and ordered a buggy to be brought round.

This vehicle, which is the hansom cab of the country, put in an appearance in a few minutes, and with a good deal of wriggling and squeezing I got inside. There is not much to be said for its looks, and still less for its comfort. The only thing it at all represents

is one of the street pianos which infest the suburbs of London; it is scarcely larger in size, and like them is very rickety, and seems to be held together principally by the gay paint which decorates its outside. Mine had two white bullocks on either side of the single pole, and two high wheels, but no springs, as soon became unpleasantly obvious. There were seats for four inside, and not quite enough room for one. As to wearing a hat, it is out of the question on account of the lowness of the roof, and while we bumped along my head was constantly thumped against the palm-leaf mats on top.

In this gilded pill-box I meandered down the various village streets and into the open country beyond, at a pace little above a walk. I did not understand then that, if you are in a buggy and want the bullocks to go faster, you have to beat the *driver*, who will then transmit the "walloping" to his "cattle." We soon pick up these things; but in my innocence, on that first day, after a couple of miles of dawdling, my usually serene temper was ruffled, and I got out and belaboured the sleepy white oxen with my big white umbrella—a pro-

ceeding which seemed to afford the "mild Hindoo" who was driving some gentle amusement, but did not take us on a bit faster. So I got inside again, and, lighting a cheroot, resigned myself to fate with the reflection that we must do at Rome as the Romans do.

After bumping and jolting along for several miles through village streets, under spreading fig trees and waving bamboo clumps, we turned suddenly to the left, thereby bringing my head into violent collision with the right side of the buggy, and, passing through an English-looking swing gate and white pillars, approached a large and fine house, the residence of Mr. F——, of the firm of Messrs. H—— & Co., whose guest I was to be for the time.

I was received at the verandah by a chorus of barking dogs and half a dozen servants in white and red turbans, who salaamed continually, but my host was absent up country, as the head butler informed me, though "mem sahib" was at home. So I followed him upstairs to the drawing-room, where I found Mrs. F——, and introduced myself. After receiving me very courteously and inquiring about my journey, she invited me to ac-

company her to dinner with some old friends who lived close by, and promised to get my morning dress pardoned; so we started shortly after dusk, with two torch-bearers to show the road and frighten away snakes from the path.

The night was very dark—perhaps the red glare of the torches made it seem more so than it really was—but I could just make out the sombre black shadow of thick trees around us, and the slender stems of ferns and bamboos, though most of my attention was taken up in looking out for snakes, which, Mrs. F—— told me, render the roads and open spaces perilous at night, and being in white satin shoes, she had a natural reluctance to tread on a six-foot cobra, or tic-polonga. However, we were soon in the safety of Captain H——'s bungalow, without having met any of these slippery gentry. Despite an excellent appetite, I found time to admire the floral decorations of the table, which were very artistic. In the centre there was a very small and green tree-fern, whose soft velvety fronds made a sort of natural arbour, and up its woolly brown trunk some really handsome creepers, with beautiful white blossoms, had been persuaded to climb

and hang down in graceful festoons. The base of the great fern was hidden by some rare orchids that gave out a most delightful perfume, and some small trailing plant, with tiny yellow blossoms, sent its tendrils about in a most natural manner. Besides the central decoration, a great number of flowers had been pulled to pieces and their coloured petals laid in patterns all over the tablecloth, twisting round the salt-cellars, circumnavigating the decanters, and imprisoning the claret-jugs in odoriferous chains, which struck me as being a novel and pretty idea. Dinner finished, we gentlemen smoked our cheroots in the verandah, where it was pleasantly cool after the recent rain, and the earth gave up a strange sort of scent of its own, mixed with that from flowering shrubs and trees in the dark compound outside. Occasionally a firefly with its pale sea-green lantern went floating past. I wish we had these beautiful creatures in our English woods. Surely they are amongst the most lovely of Nature's achievements, and to me among the few things in this work-a-day world that seem fit for fairyland.

While we lay back in the comfortable arm-

chairs, with our feet nearly as high as our heads, puffing at our long "Trichinopolies" and sipping iced brandy-pawnee, with a white-clad servant behind each chair waving a pea-cock-feather fan over our heads to keep away the mosquitoes, Captain H——, who is the superintendent of police here, amused us with some Dacoit and Thug stories, which, however, chronicled a state of things now no more existing. The Thugs have all been hanged or imprisoned; the horse-stealers no longer anoint themselves all over with palm oil, so that if any one should catch them making a midnight raid on the stables, they can wriggle free from their grasp; and the Dacoits have forsaken the lonely jungle paths, and taken to a less-exciting agricultural life. At present the chief robberies in these parts are trifling thefts of bangles and hoarded rupees amongst the natives, the property of Europeans being very rarely touched. Considering the town and all the neighbourhood was inundated with famine-stricken coolies at the last extremity for a meal, Captain H—— said the amount of crime was wonderfully small.

The next morning I was up early, and after

a refreshing tub went out into the compound until hazri should be announced. It had been raining in the night, and every leaf and spray was thickly hung with rain-drops, which glittered in the early sun like diamonds. The air itself was as fresh and sweet as possible, such as it often is on a May morning in some meadow-surrounded English country house. Here I first made the acquaintance of the gay little seven-sisters—a small sort of finch who keep in parties of that number, and play from bush to bush with a continual stream of chatter, as noisy as a convent of novices when the lady prioress has gone to bed. The little striped squirrels were in force too, cutting backwards and forwards across the path with their bushy tails held over their backs, or rushing up and down the trunks of the fig trees, occasionally stopping, often with their heads downwards, to have a gossip with a neighbour from the other end of the compound. From living long in security and unharmed, they have grown wonderfully tame, letting me stand within a couple of yards of them without manifesting the smallest uneasiness, simply keeping their bright eyes on me with an expression of

interest rather than fear. But of the kites they seemed to have a wholesome dread, the appearance of one sailing above the tree-tops causing a great commotion, so that in less than a second every bushy tail had vanished into the tangled roots and branches that formed their home and castle. They have other enemies besides the kites—among the worst the rat-snakes, who inhabit the roots of the mango and fig trees; for though these are commonly supposed to feed on the animal from which they take their name, they often vary their diet by a meal of young squirrels or fledglings. One of these rat-snakes crossed my path and escaped into the long grass on the other side of the road. Although perfectly harmless, he was an enormous reptile, nearly six feet long, as far as it was possible to judge, and glossy black and yellow in colour, his clean scale armour shining wet with the dew that had fallen upon him as he was making his way home from a night's freebooting.

Of butterflies when the sun got warm many kinds appeared, the commonest being the small saffron-coloured *Terias Hecate*, and the handsome black-and-crimson swallow-tail *Papilio pammon*,

which seemed, by the way, to be the principal victims of the graceful green bee-eaters, a pair of which had their perches on the woodwork of a disused well, and every now and then made rapid darts at passing insects. They never missed their prey, and always brought their quarry back to the same spot to be diswinged before being swallowed, the ground under their watch-towers being thickly strewn with gaily painted shreds of unfortunate butterflies and bees. These meropes are very pleasing birds, with slim green bodies and pointed tails of considerable length, but their chief charm lies in their ceaseless activity and the arrow-like certainty of their flight. Down by the same well where the bee-eaters had established themselves were many grey and pied wagtails, the exact prototypes of their English kindred in plumage, habits, and voice. It always has been an interesting problem to me why the same types of birds and insects should be spread all over the world in various countries between which one would think there never could have been any communication. It would be much more natural that each country, or at least each part of the world divided from the rest by great oceans,

should have its own peculiar fauna, agreeing only by chance, if at all, with the types of other parts; but it is not so. The grey wagtails jerk their tails in exactly the same way as their English relations, and their notes are exactly similar to those which may be heard any day by an English brook. Many of the butterflies, too, are cast in exactly the same mould on both sides of the world; a "brimstone" which I caught in the compound had the peculiar red horns with a downward bend, and the same tuft of soft down at the base of each lower wing, which characterizes the common English species. Have these creatures risen from the same stock, or have successive waves of immigration, each overlapping the other, diffused the same species and family likenesses all over the face of the globe?

In the afternoon I made an expedition into the town on foot, not much caring about any more buggy-riding after yesterday's proceedings. The road is something like a Devonshire lane, with high red banks on either side, but the clumps of bamboos and palms spoil the comparison. Occasionally there are European bungalows standing back from the track in their

compounds, where little white children are often to be seen playing about, attended by ayahs and men-servants. Further on there was a native street, with little open shops on either side: one shop devoted to sugar-cane hung up in bunches, and seeds and pulses exposed for sale in open vessels; another to earthenware chatties, and another to tinware. Once the different trades used to keep separate, but now they seem to be losing their exclusiveness, and take up their quarters where they can fix them.

Every now and then a string of women passed me, carrying enormous loads of grass on their heads and going at a quick trot. They are not particularly prepossessing according to our standard of female comeliness, and the hard work they do and the life they lead spoil them very early. They wear only one garment—a long strip of cloth called a saree, which they wind round and round their waists so as to form a short petticoat reaching to the knees, of which they bring the spare end up over their left shoulder, and let it hang down behind. The old women do not stand on ceremony in the matter of dress, and wear clothes only according to their means. Generally they are very poor.

Occasionally a native country gentleman was met going along in a private bullock cart at the usual snail's pace, but looking perfectly contented. The native writers or clerks have absorbed some English energy, and are brisker in their movements. I actually saw one in a buggy urging the driver to go faster in very good English, which he seemed to understand perfectly. The policemen also seem conscious of their official position, and proud of their semi-European dress and broad scarlet shoulder-strap with its brass plate and number.

It is said Vasco di Gama landed here in 1498, and found it a flourishing seaport, but not much of the ancient history of the place is known, and it has few antiquities. There is a fine tank in the centre of the town, enclosing about four acres of water, with flights of stone steps all round, and four carved archways, which have been partially destroyed by some Goths, and the material carried away to build houses. These Indian tanks are the great institutions of the towns and villages. Here everybody comes down to wash, and also to get drinking water, horrible to say. But it has been so for the last few thousand years, so nobody minds; and one

may any day see groups of chattering girls and gossiping housewives dipping their brass chatties close to where a fat old gentleman, with nothing on but a towel, is splashing the water over his skin, and rubbing it in as if it were some precious ointment not to be used carelessly. The frogs also inhabit these tanks, and their heads and bright eyes are to be seen all along the margins until some one comes and disturbs their reflections, when they at once retire to the deeper parts under the broad green leaves of the lotuses in the centre of the pond. Nobody seems to mind them, or fancy they give a peculiar taste to the water, and they and the cattle and village dogs use the tank contentedly with all the villagers. It cannot be a very healthy arrangement; but when running water is so scarce for half the year, it is difficult to see how else the needs of the people could be supplied.

Round the tank the official bungalows and Government offices form a wide amphitheatre, with graceful palms scattered everywhere, and filling up the background of the picture with a waving sea of plumes. But the banana is the most conspicuous and widely spread vege-

table product about this district. It grows in every courtyard and overshadows every hut; the broad green leaves, for ever swaying though the breezes be of the lightest, throw a pleasant shadow on the ground, and under them the natives take their mid-day siestas along with the children, dogs, and all the rest of the live stock—even the crows making use of them during the hottest hours of the day if they cannot find any better shelter, and their dark, glossy plumage looks very striking against the broad pale-green blades of the leaves. It seemed to be the season for the fruit, as every bush was adorned by a long, heavy cluster of plantains that would have been cheap at sixpence apiece in Covent Garden Market, but here enough to satisfy the most voracious can be got for a penny, or one anna. Perhaps the famine coolies might be fed on them since they are so abundant, but probably, though they are all very well as dessert, they are scarcely substantial enough to dine on. The leaves, after having afforded the native a grateful shelter during their maturity, are subsequently picked, and play another useful *rôle* in the shape of light and elegant plates and dishes, and even drinking

vessels; in fact, the frond is so broad and the texture so soft and pliable that it can be bent into a hundred shapes, and the folds being afterwards fastened with small wooden pegs, they are suitable for a variety of domestic purposes, but will not bear "washing up," of course.

Having done some other business, I proceeded to the custom-house, and took my luggage out of bondage—a merely formal proceeding when I stated that it had come straight up from Colombo, where, however, it was not examined, but simply placed in the custom-house buildings and then withdrawn. There was nothing contraband, but if all the boxes had been full of forbidden articles they would have passed free by this arrangement, for which none of the officials were to blame.

Calicut seems to have a very miscellaneous trade, and the courtyard of the custom-house was piled up with merchandise of every sort and variety, waiting to be cleared, and meanwhile protected from the merciless beaks and claws of the crows and kites, with which the roof swarmed, by strong netting spread from one side of the courtyard to the other. It is a great pity, I repeat, no proper harbour can be made here; if

there were one, it would be of immense importance to the "country side," and double the wealthy population of Mysore and Travancore. Probably some day the railway which now ends at Beypore will be brought on, and a breakwater erected to shelter the shipping when the south-west monsoon blows. At present the vessels lie in the open roads, and when a storm is seen to be coming on they have to up anchor and make for the open sea, for woe to the craft which puts off sailing too long, as she speedily comes under the palm trees fringing the beach!

After enjoying a game of billiards at the club and reading the latest English newspapers, I started to walk back, thinking the cool of the evening would be refreshing and pleasant, but forgetting that darkness treads close on the heels of day out here. I had scarcely begun my walk when the sun went down, crimson and gold, behind the palm groves. For a little while there was a sort of bright reflected glow on everything, and then twilight deepened into darkness, and the owls and bats came out, till it was scarcely possible to see the road two yards ahead. Luckily it was a straight one, and though several times the outline of tall clumps

of bamboos or deep shadowy fig trees made me fancy the way was lost, yet I kept on, and after a time smelt the peculiar and not easily forgotten scent of an Indian village at night—the odour of burning cow-dung and boiling ghee, and then saw the twinkling lights and the white-robed figures of the villagers standing out in the firelight of the little hamlet that lies half between Calicut and Plantation House. But the worst portion of the walk was yet to come; and the darkness increasing until it was so dense that the only way of keeping the road was by feeling the hard surface underfoot, several times I was brought to a sudden stand-still by running into the hedge or colliding with the stem of a palm tree. Once, what seemed to be the glowing end of a cigar came down the road towards me, and imagining there was an Englishman behind it, I waited until it showed close by, and then called out, "Who goes there?" But there was no answer; so, after a moment's pause, I called out again "Stop!" and the only answer was a sepulchral "stop" from an echo in the bamboo jungle at the side of the road. Thinking this very uncivil, and the cigar-end being close to my face, I put my

hand where the smoker's shoulder ought to have been and yet felt nothing; so, without more ceremony, I made a grab at the light itself, which was bobbing round me in a very mysterious fashion, and seized—not a cigar, but a huge fire-fly, much larger than the common sort, who blazed for a moment with a crimson glow of surprise, and then put himself out and declined to light up again. My chief fear, however, was of snakes, which abound on all open spaces after dark, and indeed the English never go out without torch-bearers and thick sticks to guard themselves; but I had neither, and as I was wearing low shoes and thin socks, it was with considerable relief that at last the long dark walk was finished and I saw the twinkling lights of F——'s hospitable mansion close in front of me. At dinner that evening F—— said I had done a thing which his twenty years' experience of India would have made him extremely reluctant to imitate.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE ROAD TO THE JUNGLE.

SUNDAY morning, the 30th, found me with kit packed and ready for a forward movement upon the jungle; so, after a comfortable breakfast I made my adieus to F—— and his pleasant family, tipped the butler and a great number of his satellites, who seemed fully accustomed to this habit of civilized countries, and eventually found myself *en route* for Beypore in a bullock bandy with a considerable quantity of small packages, and the inevitable Indian tiffin basket, which is an absolute necessity when one travels.

I have mentioned before what a bullock-cart is like, so I will not repeat the description. It is, however, doubly trying to ride in one when bent on catching a train, and mine kept me in a fever of worry. It was ten miles from the house to the terminus of the railway, and as

only one train went every day, and my luggage was going by that one, while bearers and all sorts of well-made arrangements awaited its arrival at my destination at Palghaut, the thought of missing it was distracting; and yet the placid white oxen in the shafts would not move faster than a walk. In vain I got out and thumped them with my heavy umbrella, and equally in vain their driver twisted their long tails into knots (until one could almost hear the bones cracking) and heaped unmitigated abuse upon their ancestors. Their tails proved as hard and senseless as their hides, and they seemed to consider that, their ancestors being long since departed to celestial pastures, it mattered little what calumny was heaped upon those unconscious heads. In brief, they won the fight and set their own pace, as doubtless they had done many times before, and I had to give in with the best grace possible, devoutly hoping something would happen to delay the departure of the train.

There is one advantage in the railway coming to an end at Beypore, which is that everybody bound to Calicut has to travel very slowly through some pretty places, and finds plenty of

time to study the people and wayside life, through which the train would otherwise whisk him in a few minutes. This bit of country is very much praised in the guide books, and is certainly full of interest, but a cicerone is needed to explain the people and their customs—an advantage which I unfortunately did not possess. The inhabitants are, even to the most casual observer, of many races and religions. In general well made and muscular, the Moplahs and fishermen of the coast are especially noticeable for their stature and fine physique. Then occasionally one passes a tall sedate Arab, with long white burnouse and staff, bent on merchandising, and cannot help wondering what has led him so far from his country, or if his thoughts are still among the brown tents of his tribe on the sandy plains of the Syrian deserts. Then there are placid-faced Hindoos, who salaam very low, but do not like to see the white bullocks maltreated by the impetuous Feringee. There are people, again, whose Jewish blood can be easily seen in their profiles and hair, though some of them are pale of complexion and some dusky. They have orthodox synagogues in the neighbourhood, where on holy days the Rabbim read out the

sacred laws to the assembled multitude and go through their ancient rites. Now and then the house of a Portuguese family is passed—only a little better than the huts of the low-caste natives—where the olive-skinned babies are playing about in the dirt much after the fashion of the native children. In dress, however, the full-grown Portuguese follow the fashions of Europe, the men wearing loose trousers and jackets, and sometimes—horrible to write!—tall silk hats, while the women favour baggy English dresses, with the waists nearly as high up as those of our great-grandmothers. About ninety per cent. of the Portuguese inhabitants of the district hold small Government positions, such as those of clerks, printers, etc. Like half-castes, they have a great objection to hard out-of-door work, and are an idle set. The Moplah tribe located here are immensely their superiors in physical structure; in fact, the Moplah women are extremely good-looking, with merry laughing faces, always amused at something, always taking circumstances with the best side uppermost—the Italians of India, in fact, as far as my limited experience goes. There were Tamils and Canarese, agriculturists every one of them;

stray Parsees or fire-worshippers from Bombay; Brahmans, with strange-coloured spots on their foreheads; solemn pundits, followed close by low-statured, curly-headed hillmen, come down from the remote jungles to barter wild honey and bison horns for the knives and linen of the dwellers by the "burra pawnee," or big sea; and all these people thronging the long road under the arching fig trees made up a scene at once bright and interesting.

But there were other spectacles less bright—miserable famine coolies of both sexes and all ages; living skeletons many of them, with their bones showing up through their shrivelled skins. They are long past cleanliness or any regard for clothing, and such fearfully dirty and deplorable objects I never saw before. Some lay at the roadside in the ditches, shivering with fever and crying out for charity as soon as they saw me; others snatched off filthy bandages, and showed their legs and bodies eaten away by sores and ulcers, or made incoherent chatterings in the hope of getting some pice. Poor wretches! I afterwards met many more of them, but it was very sad not to be able to help them.

In one place we crossed a considerable river by a broad bridge, and saw thousands of logs of wood, that had been floated down from the inland, being collected into rafts and taken to some saw-mills that stood among the palm groves. Yet a little further on we were stopped by a toll-bar—a tyrannical invention I had hoped was not to be found out here—and after paying a couple of annas we tried to get the bullocks to start again; but they refused, and got mixed up in some wonderful way, so that we had to take the yoke off their necks, turn them round, and, after putting them in again right end first, fix them up. Eventually we started anew and accomplished the last three miles, which brought us to the banks of the broad backwater flowing into the sea at this point—Beypore station being directly opposite the outcome of the Calicut road.

There was a ferry-boat waiting apparently for me—for though the bows were laden with a miscellaneous collection of native passengers, a seat with a crimson cushion on it was reserved in the stern—so, stepping in, we put off at once, and, rowed by the sinewy arms of half a dozen bronze-skinned boatmen in the usual cool cos-

tume of broad hat and small handkerchief, we got to the other side in about twenty minutes. Here the boatmen first pushed the second-class passengers over into about two feet of water and let them get ashore how they could, and then turned the boat round and put a plank from the thwarts to the beach for me. For this, however, I had to pay—my passage across, with its attendant luxuries, costing eight annas, while the coolies only paid two.

At the station I was met by a gentleman I had seen the day before at F——'s, who, after inquiring how I liked bullock travelling, and saying it was practice for any one who thought of turning philosopher, led the way to the saloon of the hotel above the station, where tiffin was ready for the first-class passengers. There was one gentleman already at work on the provisions, who subsequently turned out to be bound for the Annamully jungles, like myself; but the Beypore cook being famous for his curries, and there being only a little time to spare, we "fell to" and deferred any conversation until a future opportunity. I believe there is good crocodile shooting on the neighbouring backwater, and some small game inland. If so,

this hotel would make capital head-quarters for a week, as the rooms are very comfortable, the food good, and the balcony overhangs a garden brilliant with strange flowers and shady trees, with the broad expanse of the blue sea stretching away from the wall at the bottom; in fact, it would be a pleasant place to stay in, if there were anything to do in the neighbourhood.

I was much surprised to find that the porter nuisance is as bad here as anywhere on the European continent. No sooner had I finished breakfast than my luggage was seized upon by a whole host of individuals, who had been squatting in the verandah for the special purpose ever since my arrival. It would not have seemed so bad if they had taken fair loads, but they took just as little as possible—one fellow pounced upon two bottles of lemonade and persisted in carrying them down to the train, which stood at the bottom of the single flight of stairs. I rewarded most of the others, but the lemonade gentleman was the last straw which overcame my generosity, and I told him to go; but he seemed to think he had earned a reward, and stood chattering and grinning at the window to the amusement of the other

luggage-wallahs, so, after standing it for some time, I rolled up a newspaper and suddenly sprang out of the carriage. The fellow seemed to think his last hour had come, for he "scooted," as they say in America—fled down the platform, crossed the sandy beach and sprang into the nearest boat, and, I believe, would have cut the rope and put out to sea, only that looking back he saw that, contented with my bloodless victory, I had retired to the carriage again.

After a long delay in starting, owing, as the guard told us, to the engine-driver having suddenly contracted a bad attack of fever, and there being some difficulty in finding a substitute on the spur of the moment, we at last got off and proceeded up country.

There was nothing of much interest or very new to be seen along the line. For some time we ran through the palm groves that fringe the seashore, with the huts of the fishermen scattered here and there among them. Once or twice we came to a very abrupt standstill, and, putting our heads out of the window, perceived that the obstruction was an old buffalo or cow, who was grazing leisurely between the rails,

and sundry billets of wood had to be hurled before "Cyl" considered it advisable to move on. Afterwards we turned inland, and, leaving the palms behind, came to the regions of bamboos and paddy swamps. Here the fields were very green in places, and, like those of the neighbourhood of Colombo, simply swamps enclosed by mud embankments; in others the crops were nearly ready to cut, and little black fellows perched on muchâns, or platforms raised high in the air on four poles, kept up a continual rattle with split bamboos, to frighten away the swarming flocks of tiny birds that circled round and round overhead. Small white egrets were numerous, and the air was full of kites and hawks, while the telegraph wires were the roosting-places of bright green bee-eaters. Possibly there were quail and partridges among the paddy, for once or twice I saw foxes slinking along the sides of the embankments, doubtless on the prowl for provisions. Every village that was not large enough to boast a tank had a well in the neighbourhood worked on the common Indian plan—very ancient, and, like most ancient things, very inconvenient. The bucket-rope of these wells

passes over a wooden wheel fixed on top, and an inclined roadway leads up to the summit of the wall which surrounds each well. Two oxen, generally superannuated and extremely "gharib" are harnessed to the rope, and when they move down the incline, up come the full buckets, which are emptied out into a sluice, and then the unfortunate animals have to lower the buckets again by laboriously backing up to the wheel. In this way, first going ahead and then veering astern, they spend their eventless existences.

But on the whole there is nothing of very much interest on the run up the line, though an enthusiastic traveller says, "The railway passes through the most glorious tropical scenery and luxuriant vegetation to be found south of the Himalayas." But as I am not writing a guide book, and consequently am not in artistic hysterics, the country must be described as flat paddy swamps, with a broad muddy river to the south—which, by the way, rolls down considerable quantities of gold to the sea—and occasional clumps of bamboos or palms, hiding little villages of thatched huts with a thick population, principally of dogs and children.

Arriving at the large comfortable station of Palghaut, I found four bandies or up-country carts waiting in the courtyard outside to take me and my multitudinous belongings to "Wheeler's bungalow," where supper was to be had and an English-speaking servant to be found, who would make arrangements for the other stages of the journey.

Here F—— whose acquaintance I had made coming up, proved of the greatest service to me, as he was an old Indian, knew the languages, and was going up to his estate in the jungles, only a few miles from mine, so we had determined to travel together. What I should have done without his help it is difficult to say, as none of the bandy-wallahs knew a word of English or Hindustani, of which latter language I commanded a little. Fortunate indeed is the "griffin" who has his first journey up country made smooth for him by the friendly help of an experienced fellow-countryman; and if such help is not to be had the next best thing is to secure the services of a native servant who speaks the languages of the district to which the traveller is going, and also the language of his master.

Such servants are always to be found in the large towns, and are not expensive luxuries, as they rarely get more than Rs. 15 a month, and, if of the right sort, save the Englishman a world of trouble. In F——, however, I had a pleasant companion as well as guide; and as soon as we had seen three of the bandies piled up with boxes, we climbed into the fourth, and, giving the signal to start, turned our backs on the station—our last link with civilization, and one which we knew we should not see again for many a long day—and so proceeded down the hot road to the English part of Palghaut, which lies three miles from the railway.

If travelling in the buggy of the Indian towns is uncomfortable, the unfortunate Englishman gets even more jolted up in these country bandies; and yet, in spite of the jolting, I liked them already—they are so delightfully primitive, and are so perfectly honest about the entire absence of springs or ornamentation of any sort. They do not pretend to be anything more than they are. When you first look at them you perceive a pair of big wheels supporting a muffin-tray-like wooden platform, over which small bamboos have been arched from side to side, and bamboo

matting lashed to this with finely split rattan creepers. In the shafts, or rather on either side of the pole, stand a pair of sleepy white or red oxen, having patterns burnt into their hides, and the curved yoke resting against the front of the strange looking humps which grow up between their shoulder-blades. When you have taken in these things at a glance, you have seen all there is to be seen, and no matter how much you travel in bandies afterwards, you will find out nothing more about them except that what was very obvious to the eye will become equally obvious to the other senses. The traveller will learn that the straw which covers the body of the cart is but a poor remedy against lack of springs. Still, as one lies at full length in the dry paddy, with the pale yellow mats overhead to keep out the strong rays of the sun, the view goes gliding by the open ends of the cart, and the muttered exclamations of the driver perched on the pole sound dreamily on the ear, till there is a certain sense of comfort, if one be not over tender-skinned. Then again, once up country no one is restrained by the conventionalities of society: one feels, as the Russians say in Transcaucasus, that "the heavens are

high and the Czar far off;" and if one's coat and waistcoat are oppressive, it is easy and perfectly permissible to doff them and sit on them by way of a cushion. So, on the whole, I would much rather journey in the unpretentious bandy than endure the cramping of a buggy.

We lumbered through the long Indian street with its usual crowd of natives, some gaily dressed in all the colours to be extracted from the multitudinous dyes of the country, and some perforce contented with their own brown skins and a small dhotee or waistcloth. One or two little children ran after the cart, and, thinking it was empty, proceeded to climb in behind, but shrank back very quickly when they saw there were two real white sahibs inside. I was in constant fear we should kill somebody, as no one moved out of the roadway when we approached; but we got through in some wonderful manner without a mishap, and were soon winding amongst the fig and banian trees of the European quarter.

"And where," I said to F——, "may the shops be situated at which you buy whatever you want?" At which he laughed, and told me that there was only one shop which made

any pretence of dealing with the Europeans of the town. Everything that could not be got there must be sent for from Madras or Bombay, a week off at the least. So to this single shop we made our way, and found it a curious little den kept by a spectacled Hindoo, who was profuse with his salaams, but kept everything except the articles wanted. The main stock of the establishment seemed to be wines, brandies, preserves, and tinned provisions of various brands, while the walls all round were ornamented with pictures of Hindoo gods and goddesses on glass, mostly in vermilion dresses against bright blue skies, alternating with engravings of English gleaners and the biscuit manufactories of Messrs. Peek, Frean, and Co. Having opened an account with the "mild" Hindoo, who seemed by the way to be very quick at figures, and ordering a supply of provisions to be sent up to the jungle, we got back to our bandies and proceeded to our destination for the evening. After twenty minutes more of creaking and crawling, we entered the compound of a pleasant little white bungalow with a heavy thatch roof coming nearly down to the ground and forming a wide

and shady verandah all round, very steeply "pitched," thereby showing that heavy rains are to be expected here. This was "Wheeler's bungalow," where, although the owner was away on the hills, I had received permission to sleep and make myself at home.

Half a dozen coolies were soon at work loading up the verandah with my baggage, and with a parting injunction to them to make haste and get it done before nightfall, I and F—— plunged into the house in search of supper and the servants. The cool way in which F—— made use of other people's property considerably astonished me. After shouting ourselves hoarse in vain endeavours to rouse up a "boy," we proceeded to the kitchen in the rear of the compound, where we captured a small chokra, with only a pair of boots and a necklace by way of clothing. Him we set to make a fire, and then F—— took down a frying-pan and proceeded to grease it before putting it on the stove. Seeing my look of astonishment, F—— asked me if I was hungry, and on my replying "certainly," said that in that case I had better set to work and help him get some supper, as we were now in

a land where it does not do to rely upon servants. So I threw my white coat and helmet into one corner, and, rolling up my sleeves, was soon absorbed in poaching eggs and getting a refractory kettle to boil. When the cooking operations were nearly completed, we went to the dining-room to set the table, and without the slightest hesitation my friend dived into every cupboard and drawer in search of the necessary articles. At length we found them, together with a few tins of marmalade and preserves. These F—— set me to work to open, after solemnly assuring me he would be my bail if I was had up for house-breaking; and eventually we sat down to a capital supper, none the less palatable because it was earned by our own toil. Scarcely had we spread our napkins across our knees, when the heavy sound of a booted footfall was heard outside, and immediately after an Englishman entered and greeted F——, by whom I was at once introduced to the new-comer, S——, another of the half-dozen of coffee planters in the Annamully jungles. The latest arrival had brought a dozen of bottled beer with him, so we all sat down again and proceeded to make a capital meal,

which S—— enlivened by some jungle stories and shooting adventures. The remainder of the evening we passed in the verandah, smoking long Trichinopoly cheroots and sipping iced brandy-pawnee, which one of the servants of the master of the bungalow, who had put in an appearance only when we had finished supper, concocted in a delightful manner, showing that he had plenty of practice. I extracted what information I could from S—— about this town, but like most Englishmen, although he had been in the district six years, he seemed to know very little about the place he lived in.

Formerly belonging to the Portuguese it must have been one of their furthest outposts in those times. But the invasion has ebbed and nothing now remains here of the once powerful nation except some traces of their architectecture, with a few words which still hang about in the native bazaar, pertaining chiefly to those trades and occupations imported by the vanished conquerors. At present Palghaut does a considerable traffic in all the products of the cocoa-nut palm, especially fibre, but it is most celebrated for the "Palghaut mats," which are known all over India.

Late in the evening we separated to get some sleep if possible, as our conveyances had been ordered for daybreak, and we had a long mountain-climb before us; but whatever F——'s fortunes may have been, mine were very bad, and I did not obtain even the theoretical "forty winks." First of all, the night was fearfully hot and close, and one by one I consigned every covering on the bed to the far corners of the room, but without relief. Then I fancied in an evil moment that it must be the close, heavy mosquito curtains which were so oppressive, and proceeded to roll them up and throw them over the bed-posts. But this was a fatal manœuvre, for scores of winged creatures rushed immediately to the attack, and proceeded to refresh themselves at my expense. It was too late to put the curtains down, as the enemy were already in possession, and I turned and tossed and tasted the torments of purgatory, until patience was worn out. Then, seeing that sleep was out of the question, I struck a light, and after taking vengeance on a dozen of mosquitoes, donned my habiliments and went out into the garden to smoke. There was no moon yet visible, but she was just rising and

sending a sort of subdued silvery moon-dawn before her, which, together with the gleam of a thousand beautiful stars, made everything look soft and fairy-like. I am a great lover of moonlight. To me it seems one of the most refined and beauteous of Nature's phases, and it was very pleasant wandering here in this Indian garden, with the graceful palms and sombre figs, half seen in the shadowy beams; through deep thickets of sweet-scented shrubs and great white-flowered convolvuli, all their blossoms turned towards the rising moon, while the fireflies, with their small blue lights, meandered about amongst the dark foliage; or to sit and meditate by a disused tank, where the sacred lotus flowers had it all their own way and covered the surface of the shining water with their half-closed fragrant flowers and broad leaves. Then, too, the air was full of strange sounds not heard during the day—the ceaseless chirruping of innumerable insects, giving voice to their feelings in a thousand tones, from the thick thatch of the bungalow to the tops of the cotton trees, and down again to the low flowering bushes and long grass. Far away the jackals were fighting over the bones of a newly dead buffalo, and

the dogs of the nearest villages were barking enviously at them, apparently wishing they too were at the feast. But at length my cheroot came to an end, and, making my way back, I found a bandy with two sleepy white oxen standing in the moonlight by the verandah, lazily swinging their tufted tails to keep away the night insects. By the cart a dozen coolies were lying, or squatting on their heels, smoking and talking in low tones. These got up at once, and salaamed when I passed. Entering the house I was nearly upset by F—— in his pyjamas, with a kettle in one hand and a saucepan in the other. He, as usual, was making himself useful, and we were soon snatching a hasty chota hazri, while some of our kit was being packed and stowed in the bandy in which my friend was to make the next stage, I going on ahead—to order breakfast—in a munchiel, or swing cot with ten bearers—a mode of travelling which is much faster than being drawn by bullocks, and considered extremely aristocratic down here. The munchiel is a strong blue hammock, slung beneath a bamboo pole, and covered in by a broad flat palm-leaf mat which swings above the support. From either edge

of the mat there are strings attached, which the traveller holds in his hands, being able consequently to tip the awning to either side, so as to keep off rain or sun. When arranged with a sufficiency of pillows and blankets, it is not at all an uncomfortable mode of travelling, and one gets a capital view of the scenery from it.

Our preparations being completed, we agreed to walk some way, as the moon was up and the early morning delightfully fresh and cool. Away we went down the road that leads to the southward, F—— with bare feet regardless of snakes, and the coolies jogging along behind us. At one time we were passing over paddy swamps, where the night wind played upon hundreds of acres of waving rice, and the moon shone down on pools and water-holes, making them as bright as silver, and apparently delighting the frogs, who were croaking, far and near, in hoarse choruses. At another time we were plunging into the black gloom of a banian grove, where it was too dark to see a couple of yards ahead, and the air was vibrating with the noise of myriads of insects amongst the foliage and fruit; until after an hour's walking we passed a little roadside hut, and, the way

abruptly sloping down, found ourselves on the margin of a broad rapid river. "Here," said F——, "we stand on British soil, but yonder black bank, with the tall palms, is the native territory of Cochin, whither we are bound; and do you see those mountains far to the southward with rugged peaks standing out against the sky, and white clouds floating halfway up them? Those are the Annamullies, and above those clouds and in the hollows of those peaks lie the estates where we are to grow coffee for our stay-at-home countrymen and the rest of the world." Of course I was immensely interested at the sight of my future home, and could not take my eyes off the serrated range and the fleecy silver clouds, until the coolies came up and it became necessary to cross the river. To see if this were practicable we first sent a strong man across, and on his safely reaching the other side—though the water once came up to his chest—I proceeded to get into my munchiel, which six men were supporting on their shoulders. But this was not so easy as might be supposed, the blue-cloth hammock going round and round in an extraordinary way directly any pressure was put upon it. Eventually I was in and comfortably

tucked up, though as helpless as a tortoise if anything should happen, and all my men—five at either end of the pole—went down the slope and waded, waist-deep, into the shining water. At one part it was so deep that, to prevent me from being wetted, the bearers hoisted the bamboo pole on to their bare, smooth skulls, and I was conscious that a stumble of any one of them might plunge the whole party into the river. However, we reached the other side safely, and sat down to watch the passage of F—— in his cart. The bandy got along all right to nearly the middle of the stream, but then the bullocks became frightened or sulky, and, in spite of the frantic yells of the bandy-wallah, tried to turn back, which would probably have resulted in F——'s getting a cold bath; but the munchiel bearers dashed into the stream, and, surrounding the cart and oxen, eventually brought the whole thing safe to shore, after which we proceeded on our journey—now on the "foreign soil" of Cochin.

In spite of not having had any rest the preceding evening, the scene was so novel and the mode of travelling so strange that I found it impossible to sink to sleep. The heavy bandy

was soon left far behind, and my bearers, going at a rapid trot, carried me along in excellent style. Besides the ten men, who now worked in relays, there was one old Tamil headman, with a smooth brown skin, neatly shaven head, and spotless white cloth wound loosely round his waist. He carried a native umbrella, made of palm-leaves, and at first I wondered why he held it up so persistently even in the darkest and stillest parts, but the truth was it would not shut, so he was forced to keep it open; and as he scudded along in front, with his white robes and his unclosable umbrella, he led a sort of rude chorus to keep the men in step and lighten their labours. At first it was, "Um bay! um bay! um bay!" continued for twenty minutes, till I was beginning to wonder what the next line would be, and then the old headman stopped for a second, but soon began again, "Ah hum! ah hum! ah hum!" and after a mile or two of this he went on with, "How hi! how hi! how hi!" The monotony very nearly sent me to sleep, but not quite; and I took note of all the features of the country in order to be able to find my way down to Palghaut, should I ever have occasion to travel alone.

At one time, as we were skimming rapidly through a moonlit grove between two topes of jungle, we rapidly approached something white lying on the road. At first I supposed it must be a heap of stones, but when we came up it took the shape of a man, and I saw it was a coolie—dead. The poor wretch was lying across the road, with his arms wide apart, his pale face and open eyes turned up to the moon, and nothing to cover him but his one tattered rag of cloth. It was my first "famine coolie." The munchiel-wallahs did not seem at all affected, never varying the evenness of their jog-trot, and I could do nothing but speculate on the history of the poor creature, wondering where he was born, if his mother was ever proud of him, or if any one would miss him when he failed to return to his village, and what unfortunate chance brought him so low in the world. Half a mile further a jackal ran close by us—going, perhaps, to "bury" the dead coolie; it is probably the only sort of burial he will get, for this it must be remembered is native territory, and there are no sharp-eyed "collectors" here to inquire into the why and wherefore of every man's demise.

After this the moon went down, and the darkness became "Egyptian;" but we still sped along, and presently it began to grow very chilly, and a strange mysterious sort of light crept over the sky, near objects growing more and more distinct as the heavens in the east waxed paler and paler. The monotonous song of the bearers stopped, and the chirruping of the insects died away, so that for a time everything was silent and still, while the sky brightened and the heavy monsoon clouds showed first grey and silver, and then became fringed with pale saffron light. Gradually the golds and crimsons of sunrise climbed up into the sky, until at last it seemed all on fire from east to west, and then there was a bright glow in the horizon, and the sun rose splendid above the low grass hills; whereupon at once a new concert of sounds broke forth, and the green paroquets burst from the shelter of the fig trees, darting with glad screams through the air to proclaim the advent of another day.

I must have gone to sleep for a time, for, waking up, I found myself apparently floating along in mid-air over extensive paddy-fields, with a little village a mile ahead, and beyond

that low hills, rising gradually tier above tier into towering mountains whose topmost peaks were lost in the clouds. My coolies were, in fact, taking a short cut along the high mud walls which keep the irrigation streams inside the enclosures, and are very frequently used as footpaths by the natives. As these walls are five or six feet high and very narrow, I could see nothing of the ground from my hammock, and could not at first remember what sort of conveyance mine was; but recollections of the preceding evening soon came back, and, though the scenery was very beautiful, my thoughts wandered fondly to breakfast amid fervid hopes that nothing might have happened to F—— and the provisions. I had not long to wait, for getting amongst plots of ground cultivated with brinjals and sweet potatoes, the headman came up to my side, and with a salaam pointed to the village ahead and said, "Wallenghay, sahib." Directly afterwards we forded a shallow stream only ankle-deep, and on the opposite side found ourselves amongst scattered huts and gardens, fenced in with light bamboo hedges. Turning sharp to the right, my men put on some extra pace—having evidently been

"keeping a trot for the avenue," as the Irish post-boys used to say—and we dashed down the little native street, with its open booths on either side, the motley Hindoo crowd dividing and staring at us on either side, and the dogs barking and the chickens flying away in a ridiculous panic. Passing a broad banian tree at the head of the street, round the stem of which a rude stone terrace had been erected as a location of the village gods—half a dozen strange elephant-headed idols smeared over with red and yellow paint, and surrounded with little offerings of flowers, rice, and glass bangles—we, thirty yards further, pulled up in the clean-swept courtyard of a neat little native house, much used by the planters for breaking the journey between Palghaut and the hills.

My five hours in the munchiel had made me both stiff and hungry, and I could not help wondering at the much superior "condition" of the bearers, who had carried me all the way at a rapid trot, and yet seemed perfectly fresh—chatting with their acquaintances and chewing betel-nut without the least symptoms of fatigue. Having paid the old headman, for which purpose I called him to me, and he came bowing and

holding out both hands edge to edge—as much as to say that the sahib's bounty was so munificent that it could not be contained in one hand—I dismissed them and turned my thoughts to breakfast. The neat little Hindoo lady who kept the house soon understood our signs and some half-forgotten Hindustani, and forthwith gave orders to a couple of brown children to capture a promising young cockerel, who—luckless bird that he was—brought this fatal notice on himself by standing on the gate-post, and trying his very feeble voice at a crow in answer to a neighbouring rival. The boys attempted to stalk him, but he was too wide awake, and flew down at once, whereupon began a tremendous chase up and down and round about. The cock ran into the fireplace of a disused copper, and the children plunged after him. I thought his fate was sealed; but no, there was a loud cackle, and out he came from under the lid and set off round the yard, with his pursuers close after him. Over boxes and baskets they went, kicking up the dust and frightening the other fowls out of their small amount of wits. After ten minutes of this hot chase the boys were done up, and the widow had to come to their

assistance, immediately effecting by strategy what could not be done by force. Getting a large sieve, she propped it up with a twig of bamboo from the hedge, and tied a long piece of cocoa-nut fibre to the centre, afterwards sprinkling some rice underneath. Down came the hens from the coigns of vantage whither they had fled during the chase, and set to work upon the grain. The youthful cock was obviously aware that there would soon be none left, so, keeping one bright eye on the brown urchins, who had retired some distance, and the other on the rice, he approached step by step. I had half a mind to intercede on behalf of so brave a bird, but while I watched with suspense he approached, walked once or twice round, and then ventured under the sieve. The string was pulled, both little savages gave a howl of delight at the same moment, and the betrayed victim was borne struggling into the kitchen.

While the breakfast was thus tragically preparing, I lit a cheroot, and took a stroll down the main and only street of the little village. The inhabitants seemed to know I was a stranger and bound for the jungles, for many were the nods and laying together of heads I

saw from the corners of my eyes among the shopkeepers; indeed, I am sure I afforded an endless theme of conversation to some old women and children sitting under the village tree and expectorating bright red betel-nut juice all about them. What has always struck me about native streets is that almost all the stalls are devoted to food of some sort. One shop will be a pulse-vendor's, where many kinds of grain are exposed for sale in little wicker-work baskets, and the walls and roof are hidden by strings of queer-shaped nuts and bunches of chillies or bananas. Another shop is devoted to dried fish, which is hung up in festoons or piled on the same bench on which the proprietor sits cross-legged; and then there will be more seed shops and more fish merchants all down the bazaar. But where are the butchers, the bakers, the stationers, the linendrapers, and all the others which make a walk in London as good as a lecture on domestic economy? The truth is probably that the natives need none of them—they have not got so far along the path of civilization, and they have few needs beyond eating. As for furniture their houses boast none but the very simplest. I peeped into one or two of which the doors

were open as I passed, and could see nothing but a hearth formed of three large stones, a miscellaneous collection of fire-blackened earthen chatties of all sizes, with a few mats by way of couches, made of the finely divided leaves of the fan-palm. But these, of course, were the huts of the poorer classes; the houses of the rich natives in the English stations and towns are furnished much after the fashion of European dwellings. I certainly did expect to find both the booths of jewellers and sellers of linen and cloths in profusion, but neither were visible. The former, I fancy, have their little forges in their back yards, and in a place like this naturally do not keep much "stock," but content themselves with making bracelets and bangles when any one brings them the rough material in the shape of rupees; while for linen and clothing the inhabitants visit big weekly fairs in some part of the district, or trust to hawkers who wander from village to village with heavy packs. Another thing missing was the monkeys. Hitherto I had not seen a single specimen, wild or tame, and yet all the books of Indian travel describe them as numerous everywhere—on the housetops and among the trees. But though

monkeys may be absent, the kites and vultures are wonderfully numerous here. The sky is full of them all day, for ever wheeling round and round, each species seeming to keep to a certain stratum, the kites wheeling round the palm-tops lowest of all, while far away up under the blue dome the vultures and eagles are sailing round in mighty circles of ten miles' radius—overhead one moment and the next far away, searching the jungle, exploring the ravines and hollows, and then coming back across rivers and plains with scarcely a movement of the wings, ever gliding along with "supreme dominion" in their aerial voyages. Descending to the surface of the earth, there were many new and gorgeous butterflies here to interest the naturalist—handsome swallowtails, with primrose-yellow and velvety black wings; great *Papilio Hectors*, rich-winged with crimson and brown, and many others, too varied to be noticed, playing among the wayside herbage or hunting each other through the broad leaves of the ever-graceful bananas. A morning walk in India must ever seem pleasant to a Western stranger, however dull an observer he may be under ordinary circumstances, for its life and sur-

roundings are so new and different. Of course, he may have formed some ideas of the tropics which will be doomed to disappointment; but, taken as a whole, he cannot fail to be well satisfied. Perhaps the thing that struck me most was the lack of common flowers. I expected to find, on landing on Indian soil, the whole country a sort of horticultural show of blossoms, from the tops of the trees to the roots of the grass—a very extravagant idea, no doubt, but most people have some such when they arrive in India; whereas, in truth, there are not so many flowers visible—at this season, at least—as are to be seen in a summer walk in an English lane. Coming back, I passed a curious Kindergarten school of little native children. Whether they were at work or play, it was difficult to tell, but they seemed to be enjoying themselves. There was a tall pole erected in the centre of the enclosed yard of a neat little hut, and round the staff thirty small brown-skinned Tamil boys and girls were marching, with short sticks in either hand, with which they were beating time to a strange chorus of two or three words, repeated over and over again, in a sort of chant, by an extremely ugly old coolie woman in a

blue saree, who appeared to be presiding over the performance. It was a pretty sight to see the children all absorbed in their occupation, the girls with their black hair, glossy with oil, waving in the wind, and the boys with their curious-looking shaven heads, as smooth as an ostrich-egg, with just one long tuft hanging over the forehead. In another spot was a village academy where a half circle of little naked scholars sate round a grey-headed school-master, and worked sums with sticks on boards sprinkled with brick-dust.

Eventually a pair of white oxen and a bandy came meandering down the village street, and I was joined by F——, who was ravenously hungry and very sore with five hours' jolting in his waggon. So we got back to our comfortable little resting-house, and fell to work forthwith on some excellent chicken curry, though I was unpleasantly conscious of whence the material came. Our hostess's crockery was not very numerous nor perfect. There was an old tea-pot which had lost both handle and lid in some past period, and had its spout broken short off; there were a couple of much-chipped dishes, two cracked teacups, and a saucer. With these,

however, we managed to get on very comfortably. The furniture and decorations were about on a par with the china. There was a rickety charpoy, or native bedstead, of teak wood, doubtless very useful once, but not trustworthy now; a still more shaky table with treacherous legs, one chair without a back, and a wine box, which we used as a stool. By way of decorations, the whitewashed walls were pasted over with indiscriminate cuttings from English illustrated papers, mixed up in the most odd manner, and not one of them horizontal or exactly perpendicular—natives never can or will see the beauty of straight lines and parallels; in fact, it takes an education to do so. Staring down on us from one wall were the carved heads of most grotesquely ugly demons, with fierce red glass eyes, and wide-open mouths, showing long rows of snake fangs, while from their foreheads rose the pointed horns of the small hog-deer. Altogether, they were most hideous objects, but interesting, as showing the native ideas of the evil spirits of the jungle. Wood-carving seems to be very successfully practised in this village, for, as we sat in the broad chunamed verandah after breakfast, I noticed how skilfully all the

heads of the pillars were ornamented, each with scrollwork and mythical symbols round the upper parts. The framing of the windows—needless to say they were glassless—were also carved with delicate leaves and flowers, the abundant and varied timber of the neighbourhood encouraging the art.

By the time we had finished our cheroots twenty-four men, with their headmen and munchiels for the next stage, were squatting in the yard, awaiting our pleasure. So we bade adieu to our neat little hostess.

We were accompanied to the outskirts of the village by some of the native police; not that there was any need of their services, but they were sent as an act of courtesy to speed the parting guests, and ran by the sides of our munchiels until we had reached the open country, when they salaamed low and left us to continue our journey. For some time it was extremely hot, and, despite the awning overhead, my blue hammock turned out to be uncomfortable and liable to give cramps. I confided my feelings to F—— as we jogged along side by side, and to comfort me he narrated a story of how a fat and prosperous Englishman

from Madras started one day to make a pilgrimage to these very jungles to see some coffee estate in which he was interested. The railway part of the journey he stood well enough, but coming on from the station to the traveller's bungalow at Palghaut in a bandy was fearfully trying, and his disgust reached a climax when he saw a munchiel for the first time, and learnt that was the best means of performing the next stage. At first he could not be got to make the attempt, but eventually became persuaded to enter, and, once lying in the hammock, he was bound to finish the stage. What his sufferings were it is easy to imagine. He had never appreciated up-country travelling, and by the time he reached Wallenghay he had had quite enough of it, giving up all thoughts of visiting the coffee estate, and returning to Palghaut station the same day, whence he made his way back to his comfortable bungalow at Madras, considerably wiser and thinner than when he left. I felt myself losing weight rapidly, and was very glad of my experienced companion's assurances that we should be much cooler when we came to the Ghauts. So we stood it as well as we could, and watched the

paddy-fields with the tall palms growing from the banks which divide them, and the little wayside huts almost hidden in plantains and creeping plants, whence little children ran out to stare at our retinue as we trotted by; until presently we were aware of approaching a river, as the road began to slope down, and some oxen passed us with their hides still glossy and dripping from a recent bath. In another minute or two our bearers were splashing across a shallow stream, with overhanging trees on either bank, and the bed broken up with projecting slabs and pinnacles of grey rocks. Among these a party of native washermen were at work. All the washing here seems to be done by men, although it would appear a naturally feminine employment. The *modus operandi* is the same as can be seen any day in the streams of Italy or Southern France, and consists of rolling the linen up into a wet "swab" and whacking it against a flat smooth stone. The more muscular the washermen the quicker the linen is done, but it generally fares badly with the buttons. The style, however, was doubtless first invented for native garments, which rarely boast many such fastenings; but

now all English clothing has to take its chance with sarees and cummerbunds.

Passing these semi-amphibious washers standing knee-deep in their own "tubs," we soon reached the commencement of the real ghaut road, and the vegetation became greener and more dense. Here, too, I saw more winged life than at any other point of my journey. The crow-pheasants were numerous—handsome birds, with black-and-chestnut bodies and long pheasant-like tails, of which they seemed both conscious and proud as they strutted sedately about amongst the low bushes. The ever-active mynahs were hard at work searching for worms and slugs, though they still kept a very keen look-out for hawks sailing overhead, and their sharp alarm notes sent all the small birds in the neighbourhood to cover when they were sounded. The green paroquets also enlivened the scenery with their emerald-green bodies and long, pointed tails. For some reason they can never fly without uttering a series of piercing shrieks, to let the world know they are moving off; and as they go in flocks of ten or twenty, the noise where a party is disturbed is an experience not to be forgotten.

Perhaps the thing that struck me most as soon as the jungle was really entered was the wonderful height and size of the forest trees, not so much in lateral spread as in loftiness and the distance from the ground to the nearest branches. There was one sort of tree which was especially noticeable when we had mounted well above the plain; its trunk was smooth-barked and grey in colour, but as I ran my eyes up the mighty stems I was astonished at their height. The first branches must have been from one hundred to one hundred and fifty feet above the road on which we travelled, and the head of the trees rose quite another fifty feet; in fact, the tree-tops became confused masses of green leaves, cloud-like and indefinite, and small birds amongst the highest branches were scarcely definable dots. The mightiest giants that adorn the parks and woodlands of England would seem but shrubs in comparison, placed side by side with these forest kings, and yet my companion pointed out, as I had already noticed myself, the curious fact that there are no trees in these jungles which have the aspect of any extreme old age. It may perhaps be partly due to the fact that the scarcely changing

seasons make little mark on their outward appearance; but nevertheless, after travelling through miles of primeval forest, and being wonderstruck with the size of the trees, I should not like to say I had seen anything more than a hundred years old. But if many of the trees were wonderful, the undergrowth of smaller vegetation is rather disappointing. At first, as the broad, well-kept road approaches the foot of the ghaut, the trees and shrubs on either side combine the flora of both plain and mountain, and there the botanist can undoubtedly revel to his heart's content in grassy glades, with occasional dense patches of tangled creepers among herbaceous plants and thick-foliaged shrubs. But when the real ascent is reached, and the road degenerates into a stony bridle-path winding backwards and forwards in sharp zigzags and abrupt curves, the temperature falls with every hundred feet of elevation, and while the forest trees become taller and more closely planted, their dense and high tops shut out the sunlight from the surface of the ground, and gradually supplant all the weaker vegetation, with the exception of mosses, ferns, and bamboos, the last of which monopolize

whole hillsides to themselves and attain astonishing dimensions in quiet and sheltered ravines.

The road ascended at a gradient of one in four or five feet in places, and was so steep that in many parts, being ahead of F——, I looked down upon his munchiel and bearers thirty or forty feet below me; and then his men would take a shorter cut than mine, whereupon I would catch a glimpse of them through the bamboo clumps a considerable distance above me. In this way we went on all the afternoon, ascending the great Annamully range in a manner which was like nothing so much as going up a gigantic ladder and taking the rungs first to the right and then to the left. About three o'clock we had reached an elevation of more than two thousand feet above the plain, and a sudden break in the roof of tree-tops gave us a brief but wonderful view of the lowlands through which we had travelled the night before, lying stretched out far to the northward like a gigantic map. Every one who has journeyed much in India has viewed such a scene. There lay the yellow paddy fields, with green patches of cultivated ground and sombre palm groves, through which wound the broad

streams which we had forded in the moonlight, like meandering silver ribbons; and there were all the little villages along the high-road, up and down which tiny black dots marked the foot passengers and native carts carrying the produce of the fields to the bazaars of the neighbouring towns. Nearest of all, and looking in the clear mountain air to be within a stone's throw, though really two thousand feet below us, was the palm-surrounded hamlet of Wallanghay, with the gay crowd still moving in its bazaar, and the path we had just taken clearly marked out among the gardens and cultivated plots that surrounded it. Only a few short hours ago I was envying the eagles up under the blue roof of heaven, and here I was feeling an eagle myself and seeing the world as they see it! When we have invented flying and can use our wings like the bird of Jove, it will matter little how the face of the country is disfigured with factory chimneys and big towns, for nothing could look commonplace from such an elevation as this. But after a brief halt to admire the splendid view, we had to continue our upward progress, and soon to content ourselves with remembrances of the scene below,

for we had reached the level of the heavy monsoon clouds, which at this season float backwards and forwards along the face of the hills, so that we became enveloped in dense white mist, which circled about us and left us scarcely view enough to find the stony path that still continued ever upwards. In one place the pathway led across a smooth stage of bare rock, across the centre of which a single thread of water made its way, though this becomes, after a heavy rainfall, a dangerous foaming torrent. A little higher up the stream were six or seven deep circular holes, large enough for a man to get into, and at the bottom of several of them are heavy, round stones of a harder rock. It is these stones that have scooped the great hollows when the winter rains have come rushing down and set them continually turning and joggling about; but considering the slowness with which the grinding process must go on, and the hardness of the bed of the nullah, the lapse of time which each hole represents must be enormous. Yet further up the track—which by this time has degenerated into a mere bridle-path—is cut across by a vein of gneiss, which the road-makers have found too hard for

them to remove, and so have left it in its natural rugged condition. This obstacle alone would effectually cut off all carriage communication between the lowlands and jungle, without taking into consideration the roughness and steepness of the whole ascent. Getting out of the munchiels here, a few more yards brought us to an open grassy plateau on the spur of a mountain, and here the bearers respectfully requested to be dismissed, as it was growing late, and they wanted to get back to the lowlands before night, having a great dread of staying at such an elevation during darkness, believing it to be the high place of fever and ill-willed spirits. So we paid them at the rate of twelve annas per man, equal to one shilling and twopence in English coinage, and, rolling up the hammocks and lashing them to their poles, they salaamed all round, and were soon lost in the mist and rain on the pathway below.

Left to ourselves, F—— and I looked about for a place wherein to make our frugal tiffin and to drink the beer we had brought up with us. This we soon lit upon in the shape of a circle of rough stones placed on the very extreme point of the spur, and overhanging a deep

wooded ravine, along the bottom of which a mountain brook ran foaming and tumbling through the dark arcades of the jungle trees, till it was lost to sight far away in the direction of the plain. As the white mist came drifting round us and wetted our thin clothing through and through, and the wind moaned and sighed among the bare rocks and through the tree-tops, it was impossible not to feel the influence of the place, or quite to disbelieve it to be, as alleged, the home of departed spirits and of the inhabitants of another world. Apparently the natives living up here had felt the same uncanny sense, for the stones on which we sat down to lunch formed a samee, or worshipping place, of great sanctity. It seemed this must be the abode of a spirit famous for effecting cures of all sorts, for the most remarkable thing about the place was that the space enclosed by the stone ring was piled up thickly with rudely executed wooden carvings of every conceivable part of the human body. Legs and feet were, perhaps, the most common, but there were hands, arms, heads, and numberless other models in thick profusion. F——, who has often been here before, says he believes that when a

Tamil coolie gets sick or hurts himself in any way, he sets to work and carves out of some soft wood as accurate an image of the afflicted part as he can. With this and a little rice in a pot, he comes, doubtless in fear and trembling, to the lonely mountain spur, and, having cooked and scattered the rice by way of offering, mutters some short prayers—as likely as not the name of some single deity—over and over again for a couple of hundred times, and then throws his model arm or leg into the enchanted circle by way of memorandum to the Unseen, afterwards going on his way convinced that he has done all that is possible. If the limb gets well, it is a proof of the efficiency of the samee place, and if it does not he comforts himself with the thought that perhaps the prayers were not long enough or the rice not sufficient in quantity, and hopes for better success on another occasion. It was a curious place, and I much wanted to carry away some of the carvings; but my companion, whom the white mist had made a little superstitious, persuaded me against it by assuring me if I did I should inherit some of the sicknesses. Nevertheless, when we had finished our tiffin, we

fixed a long stick into the centre of the circle, and stuck a Bass's pale ale bottle, neck downwards, upon it by way of acknowledgment to the guardian presence for lunching on his territory; and, as the natives would be afraid to touch it, perhaps the tribute is there now.

Equally dividing the few effects we had brought up with us, we resumed our march through the gloomy, wet jungle for three miles, the road no longer ascending rapidly, but making its way along the sides of the hollows and round the shoulders of the hills, yet all the time overshadowed by mighty trees and heavy masses of bamboos, so that the ground was wet and sodden, and thickly carpeted with dead and dying leaves, which fall fast at this season, but never leave the trees quite bare, as new ones rapidly take their places. It was here I first made the acquaintance of that horrible inhabitant of these and kindred regions, the tropical leech. I was walking along over the soft matting of decaying vegetation, when I was suddenly aware of a pain in one instep, as though a carpenter's bradawl had been slowly thrust into my flesh, and naturally proceeded to investigate the cause. No sooner had I re-

moved my leathern legging than out rolled a horrid blood-distended leech about the size and shape of a ripe black cherry, and there was a mark like a shot-hole above my foot from which the blood was slowly trickling, as it always does at first, owing to the depth of stab given by the creature's lancet. F—— pointed out to me other leeches that had "spotted" us, even while we halted, and were hurrying up from all quarters, getting over the ground at a wonderful rate by the simple process of seizing a convenient object in advance with the front suckers, and then looping the body up and placing the tail end just in rear of the head, when the latter part is moved forward again. When hungry—which, by the way, seems to be their chronic condition—they are of a light-brown colour, with a bright yellow line down either side and numerous fine black points all over their skins. In length they are about an inch and a half—though they have a wonderful power of distending themselves to reach a convenient coign of vantage—and are about the thickness of a barley straw; but when they have succeeded in their fell ambition, and have drunk deeply of the blood of the white stranger, they become

most loathsome and disgusting-looking red bags, with no perceptible difference at either extremity, and their utmost ability is then to roll into some nook or corner, and lie by until their appetite returns. It has always struck me as curious that they should entertain such blood-thirsty tastes when their natural and usual food must be simply decaying vegetation. For instance, this lonely jungle path swarms with their flabby armies, and though the human passers-by must be very few and far between, the approach of any one sets them all stretching their ugly bodies and racing over the ground, in the hopes of reaching his feet and making their first and last meal on blood. Myriads of them must live and die on strictly vegetarian diet, and yet their descendants are as ready as ever to assault and drive their sharp beaks into the flesh of the first mortal who comes within their range.

After a long damp walk through the forest glades, I and my companion saw with satisfaction the sky showing through the tree-tops ahead, a sure sign that we were approaching open ground; and soon a sudden turn to the left brought us into daylight on the north-

western edge of Polyampara, the oldest coffee estate on these hills, under the management of an energetic Cornishman, Mr. G. D——, who has been out here for some fifteen years, and may be considered the founder of the district. Here my entertaining and courteous companion shook hands with me, and after exacting a promise that I would seize the first opportunity to visit his eyrie, "the highest and healthiest bungalow on the hills," he took his way through the jungles to his own estate, and left me to introduce myself to D——, who, he said, was sure to be delighted to put me up for the night. So, descrying a bungalow in the distance, I made for it, and speedily found the owner, who received me very kindly, and, as I had been led to expect, invited me to stay the night.

Coffee planters are ever early birds, and on the morning after reaching the head of the ghaut, I was roused by an extraordinary sound, which at first seemed to be a thunderstorm, but on springing up and looking from the window of my room, I saw the noise came from D——'s head maistry, or overlooker, who was exerting all his strength in beating a great Chinese gong with a heavy hammer; so I proceeded to make a

hasty toilet. By the time I had reached the verandah, the sun was just climbing over the tree-tops, and the thin white mists were falling back before him, but still resting in the deep hollows and behind every clump of forest where it was protected from the light morning breeze. Soon, lines of coolies of all ages and both sexes, grey-haired old men, women, and small children, with tools on their shoulders, were winding their way slowly and sleepily to various parts of the estate, while native maistries in white linen garments urged them on and directed their course. When the last of the men had left the group of sheds where they had been mustered, my host came towards the bungalow, and after due greetings made, and inquiries as to how I liked my first night on the hills, we proceeded to take our chota hazri, as the first morning meal is called. Having got through two or three rounds of toast and a cup of coffee—a light repast, on which, however, it is the fashion up here to do all the hard work of the morning—we drew on our heavy boots, and, donning pith helmets with streaming white puggarees behind, proceeded on a tour of inspection while the air was yet cool.

It is difficult to describe a coffee estate so that it may be clear to the imagination of one who has never seen that plant growing under cultivation, since it is little like any home production, and no part of England bears any resemblance to these jungle clearings. The first thing to be understood is that the land is a continual succession of hills and ravines, There is not such a thing anywhere in the district as a piece of ground, naturally level, of sufficient size to play a game of tennis on, but wherever you walk you are either slipping downhill or laboriously climbing upwards, except, of course, when you make use of the roads which run through the estates in two or three directions. But when working, that is the exception, and you have to force your way as the crow flies, over hill and dale. Another cause which renders the walking very hard work is the scattered logs of trees which cover the ground. On an old estate like Polyampara they are not a great inconvenience, as it is now fifteen years since they fell, and Nature, which in this land always exerts herself to get rid of dead matter as speedily as possible, has very nearly succeeded in crumbling them all back

to dust. But on a newer estate matters are different, and a walk requires the nimbleness of a squirrel and strength of a professional gymnast. When it is first decided to open a garden, the Englishman comes up to the jungle and, pitching his temporary encampment at a convenient spot near a stream, proceeds, with a dozen or two of coolies, to drive lanes through the tangled undergrowth to mark out the margins of his first "clearings." Perhaps his base line is twenty chains due south; then he works due east, north, and west, until he has completed the square; and all trees in that enclosure are doomed, so that the squirrels and monkeys had better remove their families as speedily as may be, for soon the sound of the axes is heard falling sharp and quickly all day long, and one by one the forest monarchs snap and come rushing down to earth, breaking and bending all their neighbours, until the place is one wild sea of confusion—great tree trunks in all sorts of wonderful positions and angles, and ten feet deep of withering foliage and broken branches on the ground. For the last three "hot months" of the year this lies drying under the fierce sun, a mournful wilderness of fallen

grandeur, until the planter sees the sky clouding and knows the rains are coming, when he goes one windy morning and, with a single match, fires the mighty pile. Then the flames spread far and near, and the thick yellow smoke hides the sky, while the clearing burns night and day for a week or more. Meantime the planter has either made a "nursery," where he should have by this time a sufficient quantity of carefully tended and watered young coffee plants, about a foot high, or has to get his stock elsewhere. As soon as the clearing is burnt out, the assistant is sent on with bands of coolies, and "pits" the enclosure with long lines of square holes running from side to side of the plantation. Finally, when the rains come, the young plants are carefully taken up, slipped into rough wicker baskets, and placed in the holes prepared for them, where each is carefully tucked up. There they grow into thick bushes, and the coffee planter spends the three years which must elapse before his first crop is ripe in opening more land, building pucka bungalows and coolie "lines" or sheds, and driving roads through the estate. This last occupation is very necessary but expensive work, for the

fire, though it has cleared off all the light material and smaller branches, has been unable to entirely consume the huge trunks of most of the trees, and they lie blackened and charred as they fell, one across the other, like a mighty game of black spilikins. A pathway has to be cut straight through them at all costs. Sometimes a single log of ironwood will take three or four days to move, and often the road only progresses at the rate of twenty yards in a week. Gradually, however, myriads of beetles drill these dead trunks and honeycomb them with their galleries; the hot suns of the north-west monsoon and the pelting rains of the south-west rot them and they crumble up, and as the coffee bushes grow stronger and greener, they vanish, so that in ten or twelve years the estate is smooth, green, and as well kept as an English garden.

My friend D——'s place had reached this climax some years ago, and so showed how an estate ought to look when in full cultivation. I was much struck with the beautiful symmetry of the lines of coffee shrubs, which took their course undeviatingly over hills and down the steep sides of the nullahs from wherever we

stood, right and left, to the very confines of the clearing. The advantages of this were obvious directly, for we soon came on a party of coolies hard at work weeding; and each man or woman having the space between two rows of bushes to himself or herself, we could tell at a glance if they were all working, and, walking behind the labourers, the maistries could plainly see if any work had been badly done, at once admonishing the offender. Armed with round baskets to hold the weeds, and with small implements of iron, shaped much like a mediæval battle-axe, with a spike on one side and a small hoe on the other, they were doing their feeble best at reducing the too-exuberant vegetation which a couple of days' rain had brought up. But they were a feeble set—the men thin, broken-down scarecrows, wearing nothing but a dirty cummerbund, and the women equally miserably clad in a single grimy saree. As we were walking along, one of the maistries called D——'s attention to a woman lying huddled up beneath a coffee bush, and trembling all over with fever. My companion beckoned her to come down to the road on which we were standing, and she got up and

came slowly towards us, the whole line of coolies striking work and stopping to watch us. She was really a very pretty girl of about eighteen, with a fairer skin than usual among her kindred, and perhaps, in better times, before the famine, may have been noted in the village for her comeliness; but at present she was sadly down in the world. She had drawn the spare end of her thin green saree from her shoulders, and was carrying something rolled up in it. When she came and stood before us, she was trembling very much with jungle fever, and D—— told her to hold out her hand to have her pulse felt. He rested his fingers on her wrist, and then told me to try it, upon which I found the pulsation very fast and feeble—nearly one hundred and ten beats a minute—doubtless partially due to her being frightened at being so near white sahibs. "What have you got here?" said D—— in Tamil, suddenly snatching the end of the saree out of her hand, and down fell an armful of small weeds and the unripe berries of the coffee bush, which the girl had been collecting to eat for her supper. D—— scolded her gently, and asked her how she was to get well if she ate

such stuff, and then told her to go to the "lines" and take rest, where he would send her food and medicine; so she wrapped her green robe round her shivering body and went away to her hovel. My companion explained to me that she had but just come up from her native village, far away in Mysore, with some of her kindred; and he added, "These poor creatures want continual watching when they first arrive. They are so broken down and hopeless that they cannot understand that they are not going to be allowed to die. They eat any garbage or rubbish they can find, although they know the result will be immediate and bad fever. They won't come for medicine, because they don't know what is the matter with them, and don't care; and, in fact, they are about as helpless and feeble as children of three or four years old. But I cannot afford to let them die, as it is a great trouble to bring them to the estates, and I find it cheaper to buy them food, feed them, and give them free board and lodging until they are fit to work. In this way nearly every English estate in the south of India is a 'relief camp,' and we do our best to help distress without saying anything about it."

To show me the sort of rough material which comes up from the famine-stricken lowlands, we went down to a large, roomy wooden building by a stream, which D—— called the "hospital shed," and here we found collected together a dozen of the most fearfully emaciated mortals it was ever my misfortune to behold. They were lying curled up on mats, or with their chins resting on their knees, and their bare fleshless limbs looking like withered branches. None of them moved when we entered; in fact, they were too far gone to do anything but moan and shiver under the cold fits of the ague and fever which always follows close behind starvation. But the most fearful sight of all was at the end of the room, where a coarse cocoa-nut mat was thrown over something which I took to be firewood or rubbish. Judge, then, of my astonishment when D—— pushed it away with the point of his umbrella, and disclosed a poor little native child, about six months old, screwed up into a tight knot, with its thin limbs close to its body, and the knee and elbow joints bulging out from the dry, shrivelled skin. It was like nothing so much as the desiccated rats which are occasionally

found in the crevices of old buildings; but, alas! it was alive, and kept rolling its great eyes about without seeming to see anything. All its remnant of life seemed in its eyes, and their only expression was one of wild suffering and pain. In reply to my asking if it could live long, D—— said, although perhaps it might live, it could never recover; so we covered it up, and went on sadly with our walk.

It is curious the great difficulty that exists to get labourers to accept work. One would think they would go anywhere sooner than starve, but it is not so. They cling to their districts and villages until they are almost too feeble to walk, and then only come up with great reluctance, and, needless to say, are worth little when they arrive. Besides the love of home, which seems to be very strong within them, and a great distaste for being made to do a regular amount of work, which they know will be their fate up here, they have a vast dread of the silent and sombre jungle, which is peopled with all sorts of bad and malicious spirits and demons in their imaginations. Nor really can one blame them: the prospect of coming among the chilly airs and

deadly mists of these regions, and probably being buried on some lonely hillside, with no kinsmen to perform the last rites for them, is not pleasant; in fact, it needs a "Britisher's" pluck to do it willingly, and that is a quality of which these poor grain-fed people are very destitute.

END OF VOL. I.

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